

Cocoons and a Red Butterfly:
Fluye Project & Tlacuila Nepantlera Practice

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Cocoons and Butterflies

Fluye & Tlacuila Nepantlera Practice

The decolonization path of transformation started with self-knowledge and self-recovery as an auto-ethnographic journey through my art practice. This was a personal and collective transformation through my art practice. My focus was on healing ancestral and migration traumas, bringing my indigenous legacy into my artistic and scholarly endeavor. Through my MES, I had the opportunity to have a dialogue between my identities and my being, and it manifested as two projects, the methodological process as *Cocoons* and the workshop application series as *Fluye*.

The methodological project, *Cocoons*, encompasses an auto-ethnographic exploration through multiple art disciplines such as poetry, performance, photography and painting that emerged as my *Tlacuila Nepantlera* art practice. The goal of my practice is to experiment, decolonize, and liberate, and has three main transformational phases (cocoons): 1) radical love, 2) red path, and 3) divine feminine. Integrated into the practice and phases are the power of the erotic, indigenous Nahua and Cora philosophy, and my own mestiza history. Part of *Cocoons* involved personal transformations in various capacities at: artist residencies with Watah Theatre Trans-disciplinary Artist Program (TAP) in Toronto and in the Centre for Art and Good Living in Longo Mai, Costa Rica; participation in Pocha Nostra's Rebel Acts and Aluna Theatre; internships in ExpresARTE and Jumblies Theatre; and working with the artists in Perez Zeledon, Costa Rica on the *Fluye* project.

The *Fluye* project consists of a workshop series in eight communities in Costa Rica. Its purpose was for participants to explore themselves using transdisciplinary practices, enhance the use of intuition in the creative process, explore connections to rivers, and to build a network of artists and artisans in an effort to create a community vision of the Biological Corridor's fine arts and crafts. The workshops also delved into the collaborative *Tlacuila Nepantlera* art practice and in collective transformations.

Through these two projects *Cocoons* and *Fluye* I was able to fulfill what I had aimed to study. It was an honour to have the opportunity to dwell in introspection and commit to this ancestral journey.

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Why am I writing?

Because I must
must aid my transformations,
must have words aid my learnings
the process to analyze and reflect.

for the woman who dies doing so,
for the woman who dies wanting so,
for the woman who can only dream doing so.

Because only after one self-actualizes,
one can help the community to actualize

Writing allows me to undo the knots,
allows me to desnudar my bodies,
to see what naked truth tells me

Because Anique J. Jordan told me this last message passed on to her by Pat
we would all be artists if we were courageous.

I write even as I am scared to be heard,
to be so loud that I will finally hear my heart,
or the essence of my soul speak,
or my real voice to sing

I am petrified to be honest,

I fight for when the sun is out

how the deaths of my last grandparents
left me weeping
I filled a river to take me to them
I saw the stories get buried with them
to the bottom of this river body

more silence
paramount and symbolic
in my search for home
But I know it is all inside me
I know that the knots must be unravelled

tengo que desnudarlo

I am petrified to be honest,

I fight for when the sun is out

How I am reluctant to write about love
radical love beyond boundaries
fluidity
soft lips
cosmic lovers

I am petrified to realize I am a hypocrite
I bury stories
while I dig
I understand

I fight for when the sun is gone

what hurts is the separation between mi mami
How it hurts to have separated in our thoughts
how we used to talk about fairies and unicorns
ghosts and our hauntings

and the act of making my self true,
desnudo me

How I am now aware of the terrors and fears
that leave me speechless.
torture
exhiles

The fear of not being tu *niña bien*

the act of making my self true,
i become,
a shaman
a magic woman

y me quedo desnuda
yo y el silencio
naked.

Chapter 1: Birth of a Tlacuila Nepantlera

Searching for and developing a Decolonial Art Practice

Abya Yala	<i>noun</i> \ 'aβja 'jala \ Kuna language meaning flourishing land or land of vital blood used refer to the American continent
autohistoria	<i>noun</i> \ <i>autois'torja</i> \ a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir
Camino Rojo	<i>noun</i> \ <i>ka'mino 'roxo</i> \ the way of our indigenous grandparents that teaches us about maintaining respect and a relationship with Mother Earth and all the elements, recognizing that they are alive.
Cora	<i>cxnoun</i> \ 'kora \ Indigenous People of Western Central Mexico, who call themselves <i>náayerite</i>
latinx	<i>noun</i> \ ' <i>latinks</i> \ a way to refer to all genders along the spectrum from Latinoamerica or Abya Yala, instead of usage of latino
Mestiza	<i>noun</i> \ <i>mestiza</i> \ mixed blood, indigenous and european
Mexica	<i>noun</i> \ <i>mek'sika</i> \ Indigenous People, who are often referred as Aztec, who speak Nahuatl
morena/morenita	<i>noun</i> \ <i>mo'rena</i> \ dark-skinned, brown, historically was used for the Moorish people in Spain
Ñuhu	<i>noun</i> \ 'juu \ language belonging to the Oto-Pamean branch of the Oto-Manguean language family also known as Otomi.
peyote	<i>noun</i> \ <i>pe'jote</i> \ Cactus plant from Mexico which is considered a divinity
Quetzalcoatl	<i>noun</i> \ <i>ketθalko'atl</i> \ Main God of Aztec Cosmogony related to the wind, life, light, wisdom, knowledge and fertility, Kukulcán for the Maya. Name means feathered serpent in nahuatl.
tatara-abuelitas	<i>noun</i> \ <i>tataraaβwe'litas</i> \ Great Grandmothers
tatara-abuelitos	<i>noun</i> \ <i>tataraaβwe'litos</i> \ Great Grandfathers
tlacuila nepantlera	<i>noun</i> \ <i>tla'kwila nepant'lera</i> \ a liminal artist who works across genres in the in-between of identity, in a constant flux of geographies, between languages and cultural ties
Tonatzin	<i>noun</i> \ <i>to'natθin</i> \ Main Goddess of Aztec Cosmogony, mother or partner of Quetzalcoat'l related to birth, life, death, rebirth, midwives, doctors, healers. Means 'revered mother' in Nahuatl

Birth of...

Soy (I am), a collection of seeds, a multitude of paths, deep roots, unification of blood streams, different land (dis)connections, a constellation of fragments. I conjure creativity through my body, with words, colours, and light. I seek the intersection of creativity, spirituality and ancestry. I brew dreams, futuristic mythical art that is medicine.

I am a *morena* woman¹ from mixed ancestry, from Abya Yala², born in Queretaro, Mexico, also known as a place of rocks in Otomí indigenous language. I can't precisely trace the places and people I come from further back than two generations. I, like many others, am the product of the violence that Spaniard Colonization perpetrated, where we were made to deny and forget our indigenusness (Hernandez-Wolfe, 2013). My ancestral background is blurred and fragmented, it is contaminated with the disease of silence. At least I know I have Cora blood; I know I am mixed, a mestiza, and my blood sings to tunes of intermingled stories from the northern Sierra of Jalisco state where Peyotes share creation stories, as well as from the Valle de Mexico, and Hidalgo. I know that my stories could have ancestors dancing near pyramids devoted to Tonantzin and Quetzalcoatl for generations. There are fragments, and many stories are silent. I also have stories from my European *tatara-abuelitos* (great grandfathers) who came on ships to escape prescribed priesthood and other unknown reasons to build a new life in Mexico. There is a strangling silence, silent names, and many herstories absent from my *tatara-abuelitas* (great grandmothers). The stories are woven into my roots of decolonization in struggle, in silence, and in survival.



¹

brown skinned woman, praised, and or desired for her skin tonality

²word first used unanimously to name the American continent in Continental Summit of Nations and Pueblos of Indigenous Peoples Abya Yala, in Quito, Ecuador in 2004.

Birth of...Cocoons and Fluye

I have given a Spanish name, *Fluye*, to what I previously named the *Transdisciplinary Community Art Project (TCAP)*. I named my more personal process *Cocoons* (in Nahuatl it would be *Tecilli*). At the initial stages, it was called decolonial art practice (DAP). *Cocoons* started in Toronto, and both *Fluye* and *Cocoons* developed in Costa Rica.

Cocoons

Through *Cocoons (DAP)*, I studied the role of transformation and explored my personal decolonial art practice through the examination of my *tlacuila-neplantera* identity transnationally in Toronto, Costa Rica, and Mexico. The purpose of *Cocoons* was to develop an arts based decolonial methodology with a focus on indigenous cosmologies³ and spiritual *meztizaje*, rooted in folk catholicism and nature based indigenous spirituality with Mexica and Cora roots. Through this process, I developed techniques and applied theories, while using art as creative social interventions in Toronto and in Longo Mai and Las Nubes, Costa Rica.



Fluye

The *Fluye project's (TCAP)* first intention was to gather women in an intimate scenario, but eventually evolved to include all artists or *artesanos* from Las Nubes in engaging in creative cultural workshops. The focus was on collective transformation through the use of transdisciplinary art forms such as poetry, performance, and visual art to conjointly explore themes. The goals of *Fluye* were for participants to: 1) explore different forms of artistic expression including their own art forms; 2) develop a women's art collective; and, 3) create a Memoria (a final document with art processes, reflections and art) which became a book of poetry.

³Cosmology is used here to refer to a branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of the universe (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary).

Both sections of my project adopted arts-based research methods which were action-oriented, equitable, and participatory. I used this approach with three mediums/processes: performance as collaborative arts-informed research; photography as visually-informed arts-informed research; and poetry as auto-ethnographic research. The research methods and details of the projects will be explained further in Chapter 2.

Searching for a Decolonial Art Practice

Through my studies I began to brew a personal definition and a model of decolonization. I came to understand decolonization as a process that crafts a way of being that ties the mind, the heart, the spirit, the body and the land in transformative ways that are primarily about remembering those relationships and our indigenous legacy. As described by Harsha Walia, decolonization is about liberation and healing from the damage of colonization, imperialism, racism, hetero-patriarchy, ablesim, and all other forms of oppression and the ways in which we are complicit (2012, p. 241). The term 'decolonizing' signifies a process of acknowledging that colonization happened and working to disentangle from colonialism while unlearning societal effects (Russell in Barndt and Reinsborough 2009). It is important to define colonization, so Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird refer to both the formal and informal methods (behavioral, ideological, institutional, political, and economical) of colonization, documenting the subjugation and/or exploitation of indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources (2012 p. 3). According to them, one must be openly honest and ready to embark on decolonization, as well as knowing it requires us to consciously and critically assess how our minds have been affected by the 'cultural bomb of colonization' (2012). They emphasize the decolonization of our minds and actions, but I have come to realize that the journey is also in our hearts, bodies, sexuality, and spirituality. Thus, decolonization is an integrative process that rejects colonial damaging 'gifts' but is devoted to finding ways of being and becoming connected to indigeneity, ie. Earth-based spirituality, which will be discussed later. For Gloria Anzaldúa, the colonial 'gifts' are connected with Greek myths and philosophies as well as the Western Cartesian dualisms of body-mind, human-nature (1987, p. 90; Rivera Ayala, 2009). Like Anzaldúa, I have decided instead to focus on the mythologies and philosophies of this continent (indigenous, mestiza, and diasporic) and to start to nurture a relationship with the Earth; first by acknowledging that I am part of her; and second, seeing art as an entity with the possibility of being a conduit to spirituality, not as a 'dead' object (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 90).

To decolonize means to go against colonial conceptions such as time. I have come to experience decolonization as a process and a practice for myself and the Latinx⁴ community that permits the past, present, and future to collide and mingle. According to two of my mentors, Deborah Barndt and

⁴ Considering gender fluidity and a conception of gender away from heteronormativity towards a trans queer futurity where there is more than the binary of male (o)

d'bi young anitafrika, we are in a society where time is seen as a progressive line that is tied to industrialization, the value of production, and notions of constant success (personal communication, May 2015; 2014). Through my decolonization process, I engage with time and futurity with José Esteban Muñoz as integral to a concept of queerness that is imbued with utopia and queer futurity as a possible reconfiguring of self and the collectivity that allows any expression and form of loving (2009). I played with the construct of self and being in community through queer futurity and with the spiral or cyclical concept of time. A spiral conception of time is central to decolonization, one which is tied to Indigenous people in Costa Rica and my ancestors in Mexico, as well as integrated into oneself as a latina mestiza (Christian González Gómez, personal communication, February 2015: Aztec Philosophy | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy” 2014). Michael Yellow Bird (2012, p.3) has created a conceptual model of decolonization in which he defines it as both an event and a process with spiral connections of birth and rebirth:

Process: decolonization means engaging in the activities of creating, restoring, and birthing. It means creating and consciously using various strategies to liberate oneself, adapt to or survive oppressive conditions; it means restoring cultural practices, thinking, beliefs, and values that were taken away or abandoned but are still relevant and necessary to survival; and it means the birthing of new ideas, thinking, technologies, and lifestyles that contribute to the advancements and empowerment of indigenous Peoples.

Event: decolonization as an event, decolonization concerns reaching a level of critical consciousness, and active understanding that you are (or have been) colonized and thus find yourself in life circumstances that are destructive, and externally controlled.

My view of decolonization is very much associated with Yellow Bird's model by including simultaneously the past, present, and future through restoration, creation, and birth, whatever is necessary for the continuity of Indigenous Peoples. But as I said before, this includes in unison the emotional, embodied and spiritual dimensions of this model. Although, I am conscious that this model is for Indigenous people and that I did not identify as indigenous while growing up. In Mexico, I was just a *morenita* (dark skinned) girl with a light-skin mother. Questions arose early wondering why I was not as white as my mother. When I was four, questions lay heavy on my cinnamon skin while I sat on her lap. I disliked being so dark like my father. I wanted to be fair and beautiful like my mother, or so my family and society taught me that fairness equated beauty. She told me that I was blessed and was as dark as La Virgen de Guadalupe, who is even known as *La Morenita*. But even still, I wished in silence that I could be lighter. My dark skin got to symbolize the (in)visible indigenous blood. Also, I was reminded of my indigeneity every time I or others noticed my small hands and feet. But it was not until I arrived to Canada when my search for my ancestry became more profound with the insistent and intruding questions about my background from

and female (a) away from using the masculine word (latino) as neutral (Cohen, 1997).

white Canadians. Consequently, my model and process of decolonization is tied to my reality as a mestiza migrant from Mexico living in Turtle Island⁵.

As a settler in Turtle Island, I am complicit with the Canadian colonial project. As a cis-gendered, able-bodied, mestiza Mexican immigrant, I am constantly understanding the depths of my decolonization process in relation to this land's colonialisms and realities. Andrea Smith says one must check to ensure that our model of liberation does not become the model of oppression for other people (Smith, 2005, p. 69). Hence, I have been encouraged to look at ways my decolonization enforces the liberation of First Nations people of Turtle Island (where I reside) and of Indigenous people elsewhere (wherever I work or travel). Walia suggests that we learn the histories of the lands where we live, organize solidarity work with clear consent and counsel of an Indigenous community or group, build long-term relationships, and once trust is earned from Indigenous peoples never assume it (2012, p. 250). I recognize that Turtle Island is not my ancestral land, and as such, I want to start meaningful long-term relationships and nourish the ones I already have with Indigenous Peoples. I also acknowledge that there is much to learn and unlearn. Certainly, I must be actively participating in solidarity movements for 'political liberation, social transformation, renewed cultural kinships and the development of an economic system that serves rather than threatens our collective life on this planet' (Walia, 2012, p. 253). I hope to be able to actively undertake projects and tasks towards profound solidarity work and renewed relationships with First Nations as my continental cousins and with Indigenous Peoples in Abya Yala, or Latin America. For example, I met Christian González Gómez, a Boruca Indigenous cultural leader on my first trip to Costa Rica. We became friends and in collaboration with Charmaine, we all worked to put together a Boruca Art Exhibit in The Crossroads at York University. It was a great success and I have continued to be in contact with him. Through our conversations, we have discussed the differences between being indigenous and being mestiza.



⁵ Turtle Island is the name of North America given by Original People of this Northern Land.

I have been contemplating what it means to be mestiza for some time. It is a confusing state of being. Feeling the converging histories, the conflicting alliances to differing ancestries. Yet through decolonization I have engaged with the consequences of bearing an (in)visible indigenous legacy. Historically, mestizas have been made to reject indigenous languages, traditions, and proclaim an all inclusive Mexican identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Forbes, n.d.) even though mestizas often enjoy economic and social status gained from our Spanish heritage (Ibid). At the same time, Mexican culture is a culture that includes indigenous and colonial cultures. It is so visible in the way we celebrate and eat native beans, tortillas, salsas but also lots of cheese (a European gift). My confusion is that there is ambiguity in the roots, and an amalgamation of practices that one sometimes must choose at certain time. But in the choosing, my family preferred to choose the Spanish, the Catholic, what is perceived as the 'proper' legacy to adopt. I realized that there has been a shift in the way I have been approaching my identity as a mestiza. I understand now 'that being Indigenous is not just an identity but a way of life, which is intricately connected to Indigenous peoples' relationship to the land and all its inhabitants and Indigenous struggle demands solidarity on its own terms.' (Walia, 2012, p. 250). My decolonization process has pushed me on the path to understand mestizaje⁶ more profoundly, to search to know which languages we once spoke, where my great-grandparents were from, what kind of indigenous blood ran through my veins; this process led to my desire to learn Cora and Nahuatl languages, history, myths and spirituality, as well as traveling to mother lands and starting meaningful relationships.

It is also important to mention the risk of using decolonization as a term and a way of healing. Dian Million highlights how this term has been used with techniques of state violence and has become a new way of undermining a connection to the land (2013). It has been used as a tool of neoliberalism within therapeutic endeavors, which instead of reconnecting First Nations to indigenous ways it introduces the self into the capitalist framework of the neoliberal hetero-patriarchal society (Million, 2013). I acknowledge the risks and strive to be aware of the dangers while engaging in decolonization for myself and others. It is important to explain that my definition of decolonization is strictly tied to my practice as an artist. My decolonization is though an art practice which is courageous enough to go through rupture, pain, and renewal; in other words transformation. It is one which is playful and looks to weave the mixed ancestral legacies, the stories, the knowledge, and to repair the trauma with creative mystical art and cultural production. Therefore, I have concentrated my study to create a methodology and my own artistic practice.

⁶I acknowledge this field is a new area to explore in the future. I hope to also research my Spanish-Moorish heritage.

Developing a decolonial art practice

*my art practice
is a decolonial one.
looks into
soil grounding
soul searching
and wound healing
I am looking to find the names forgotten
the indigenous secrets within my ancestry
to uncover the knowledge
gather the dust left
and recover an earthbound way of being
that carries integrity, sacredness and urgency*

This endeavor has been strictly aimed to understand and define my artistic and cultural practice. Both my definition and my model of decolonization have been nurtured by the mentorships and art residencies I have had the honour to have experiences with dedicated and brilliant artists, mentors, scholars, artistic collectives, and creating beyond national borders. I was seeking to learn radical and creative models of creation, theatre, or embodied methodologies. Part of the search was to practice these newly acquired participatory and solo creative processes with the ones I already held. I experimented with diverse artistic and cultural production techniques and a powerful dialogue began with emancipatory theories with Black feminists, indigenous and Chicana theorists, among others.

The process of searching for my decolonial art practice has been informed by mixed arts-based methods with a focus on autoethnographic research. Patricia Leavy describes auto-ethnography as a deliberate use of myself as subject and it includes assumptions, experiences, emotions, psychology, physicality, and intellect; it also requires the researcher to share 'understandings and impressions' in a specific way that contains her social reality (2009, p. 36). I become a central part of the research by communicating my experiences and subjectivity. It is a method that rejects false claims of neutrality, promotes reflexivity, and raises self-consciousness (Leavy, 2009, p. 37). Basically, I engaged in a deep self-knowledge study while crafting an artistic methodology and practice of healing migration trauma, of becoming, of understanding identity, and of searching family genealogy. I adopted a process similar to what Anzaldúa described as *autohistoria*, “a term I use to describe the genre of writing about one’s personal and collective history using fictive elements, a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015, p. 578). *Autohistoria* is a reinvention of autobiographical forms by women of colour, like Anzaldúa, based on reflective self-awareness in equity work and telling your own life story by simultaneously telling the story of others (Keating, 1990). I see *autohistoria* as any communicative form that carries the account of one's biography and includes an honest and critical description of society. It also takes into consideration my ancestors, my migratory trajectory, and the spaces and political context of those places and peoples. Therefore, it has been important to connect my research to my place of origin, its mythology, and my family history while focusing on my experiences, emotions, assumptions, and thoughts.

Similarly, Anzaldúa defined *autohistoria-teoria*, as “a personal essay that theorizes” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015, p. 578). It involves life storytelling and self-reflection with theorizing. Essentially it interweaves personal and collective identities, using personal experiences as a lens through which to reread and rewrite existing cultural theories, as well as to explore new thoughts on stories of healing, self-growth, cultural critique, and individual/collective transformation (Keating, 1990). This process describes how I explore and reflect on my life stories while theorizing my decolonial art practice and the search to define it and understand it. Also, this form has informed my major research methods, as well as the writing of this report.

As part of *Cocoons*, I had the privilege to work with d'bi young anitafrika in the Watah Theatre and to use her Sorplusi methodology. Sorplusi is an integrative methodology for artists and non-artists that focuses on answering and understanding questions like: *Who am I? How am I? What is my purpose?* (anitafrika, 2012). It explores the principles of Self-knowledge, Orality, Rhythm, Political content & context, Language, Urgency, Sacredness, and Integrity (S.O.R.P.L.U.S.I) which the practitioner explores through their five bodies: the Physical, the Mental, the Emotional, the Creative, and the Spiritual (anitafrika, 2014). I was an artist in residence in the Trans-disciplinary Artist Program (TAP) from October 2014 to June 2015. TAP is a multi-

layered artistic residency where I created a cross-genre biomyth monodrama called *Red Surrender*. Biomythography is an auto-ethnographic method coined by Audre Lorde, “combining elements of history, biography, and myth” (1982). I studied and created art through this methodology rooted in ancient African knowledge and grounded in Buddhist philosophical thought (anitafrika, 2014). In the last eight months in my artistic residency in Watah, I developed my decolonial art practice. It helped me to practice my artistic role, as one that explores mythology from Mexican popular and Aztec, Maya, and Cora indigenous traditions. I became an artist who finds and reclaims myths, and creates new versions of the corrupted ones rooted in these ancestral traditions. I have attempted to contribute to the contemporary mestiza indigenous aesthetic in the realms of Aztec and Cora art for myself and others.

My art is often grounded in my own life's story of understanding myself, my indigeneity, and migrations interwoven with my family history. The search for my decolonial art practice became a study of identification and ‘disidentifications’, the latter known as the processes when one, as a person of colour, queer, out of the box person, must daily endure to fit in or find oneself surviving through a society that feeds white supremacy, patriarchal, colonial, and heteronormative ways of being and operating (Muñoz, 1999). My work defined as *Cocoons* can be described as periods of transformation in a space (spatial, mental, spiritual, artistic, and emotional) needed to resist the models prescribed by the mainstream society while finding myself. Within *Cocoons* I am able to reject the identities that are not what I represent, ie. disidentify from patriarchal formations of heteronormative womanhood. I also created new modalities devoted to healing and radical self-formation (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6). These periods offered transformative modes of survival suited to my context and encouraged creative ways for me to build self and community as a creative being. On the other hand, *Cocoons* rejects ethnocentrism which Anzaldúa says is the tyranny of Western aesthetics (1987, p. 90). According to Mignolo and Moarquech, one of the four agents of decolonial aesthetics is redefining our relationships with ecology, which is thinking *with* water, soil, plants, animals, and Mother Earth like many indigenous people living in the Americas (Friday, October 11th, 2013; 2013). A dominant western anthropocentric system reinforces the belief that nature as a whole or in part has no intrinsic value. Nonhuman nature becomes something to be restructured in accord with human intention, a collection of resources to be ‘developed’ for human use. (McLaughlin, 1993). Instead, I have chosen a practice where humans and nonhumans are collaborators. *Cocoons* focused on working with cacao, rivers, and jungles to create decolonial art with decolonial aesthetics.

It is also important to mention what identification is; in psychoanalysis, it is defined as a process where a subject assimilates an aspect, or an attribute of the other and is transformed to fit the model presented (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1974). Identification is as important as disidentification. I looked at what I already identify myself with, what I desired to identify with, and what I had not already done so. This has involved integrating the

factors of becoming (ie. *tlacuila nepantlera*, poet-painter) and arriving (from Abya Yala to Turtle Island with a constant back and forth between lands), arriving to Turtle Island as a daughter of Abya Yala's population with mixed ancestry, mixed indigenous ancestors, and diverse *Romantic*⁷ European ancestors. Whom could I identity with? Being Mexicana was not enough, being latina was very vague, so I ended up with mestiza to describe my ancestral background. But I would rather call my self a *mariposa* (butterfly) because of my constant movement as a transnational artist, working in Costa Rica, Mexico, and Canada, just like the wondrous monarch Mariposa that flies endlessly between Mexico and Canada. This mariposa journey has been to piece together ancestral indigenous knowledge, spirituality, and culture to create decolonial art.

Cocoons stems from a close analysis of my own self through solo transformation work and collaboration, but also contains collective transformation. Transformation is the creative process that allows an evolution toward decolonization and *recuperación histórica-cultural* (cultural reclamation). Eventually, transformation can be used to initiate change, a move to a radical, liminal space, or *nepantla*, which is an in-between space that fosters the ability to transgress social constructs, such as for gender or race.

Tlacuila – Nepantlera

Tlacuila Nepantlera is the term I choose to describe myself. *Tlacuila* is the one who traditionally painted and performed Mexica (known as Aztec) codices. Being a *Tlacuila* is closely related to the Nahuatl philosophy of *in xochitl in cuicatl*, *Flor y Canto*, or Flower and Song. The Nahuas used '*in xochitl in cuicatl*' to refer specifically to the composing and performing of song-poems and to refer generally to artistic and metaphoric activities like singing poetry, music, and painting/writing (understood as one activity) (Aztec Philosophy | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy” 2014). I have come to understand *Tlacuila* as a painter AND poet strongly tied to the philosophical term of *Tilli in Tlapalli* (red and black ink of the codices) where the colours symbolize *escritura y sabiduría* (writing and wisdom). The Nahuas believed that through metaphor and symbol, communication with the Divine⁸ could be attained, and *topán* (that which is above—the gods and spirit world) could be bridged with *mictlán* (that which is below—the underworld and the region of the dead) (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2002, p. 287). Anzaldúa also sees herself interacting with the black through her writing, and the red representing blood is entangled with silence from the constant struggle (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 289). In my a bio-mythic performance and visual

⁷ Romantic, meaning descendants from Peoples from Spanish, Italian, French, but recognizing the pluralistic nature of these people. ie. Spanish having background from Moors and Mozarabes.

⁸ The Divine, of relating to, or proceeding from God, (Gods, or Goddess, Goddessess); directly from a deity (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary).

installation piece called *Red Surrender*, developed in Watah Theatre while in my TAP residency, the main character Rubi must first acknowledge the existence of Silence, as an entity. Then she attempts to befriend Silence, and lastly, she allows Silence to be free from her. Rubi allows Silence to disentangle from her body, her heart, and her stories to exist in the beginning of time in an alternate reality known as the Red Universe. After considering the philosophy of Flower and Song, I came across a Mexican proverb that showcases it: “Out of poverty, poetry; out of suffering, song”.



Identifying as *Tlacuila Neplantlera* has also meant committing to and unifying with the philosophical realm of ancestors. In studying Nahua metaphysics, I learned that human beings and the cosmos are constituted by an eternal self-generating and self-regenerating sacred energy and humans' purpose is to find our balance with the balance of the cosmos (Aztec Philosophy | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy" 2014). As an artist, it is my role to bring this balance and awareness of self- and collective- transformation through knowledge and creative activity. As a poet-painter, I engage in transformation through verse, through the arrangement of language as well as through visual art, through camera work or paint. *Nepantla* means, *tierra entre medio*, or land in between; in Nahuatl, it is a space of experimentation, of discovery and mystery. Nepantla briefly holds the existence of dark corners within us and allows me to wander to untraveled spaces of my being, through family stories, manifesting new knowledge of myself and my peoples. I first heard of this term from Gloria E. Anzaldúa and her developed theories of *nepantla*. She reclaimed these spaces and moments as places of "ambiguity, of change, liminal, in- between spaces" where borders are crossed, identities transgressed, and multiple realities experienced (G. Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013). I find and dwell in nepantla as a passageway to indigenous worldviews. I am in Nepantla when I am looking at Cora and Aztec spiritual practices and beginning to learn the language. I am mindful and recognize that I am mostly learning from a source that has been removed or buried, and that I must start a relationship with the direct descendants and caretakers of these worldviews. While developing *Red Surrender*, for example, I contacted a friend Ivan Garcia, a Nahua dancer. He gave me an introduction and taught me some fundamental principles of the dance.

I am proud to say, I have been part of "the revival and blossoming of latin[x] memory and traditions" (Hernández-Wolfe, 2013, p. 18) through the project of *Fluye & Cocoons*. One of the ways has been through the use of language. At the beginning, it was important to use the terms in Spanish, to highlight my mother tongue. Now, I acknowledge that Spanish is a colonial language, but I recognize it still carries my cultural background and a large portion of the context. After being immersed in decolonial literature, I sought ways of describing and naming my process through the use of Nahuatl, the language of Nahua people. I found names like *Abya Yala*, Kuna word to describe Latin America. I also adopted or created a nomenclature system for myself, for example *Tlacuila-Nepantlera*. I use latinx, instead of latino, latin@ to address the gender binary that is oppressive and instead include the spectrum of gender expressions. I use latinx to refuse the usage of latino as seemingly neutral, to make a statement. It is through the re-using of Nahuatl language and the adoption of these new terms that I am reviving the culture of latinxs in Canada.

Nepantla spaces act as our own utopias, as liminal spaces of desired reality. Anzaldúa also referred to Nepantla as the transition between worlds, and between differences in identities. Nepantla is a pivotal place of agency and activism, where one finds meaning (G. Anzaldúa and Keating 2013). I facilitated Nepantla in my own art making and while facilitating the *Fluye* collective project. I have become a *Nepantlera*, a liminal artist who works in the in-between of identity, in a constant flux of geographies, between languages and cultural ties, *ni de aqui, ni de alla*. In performance theory, the liminal is the in-between, the spatial threshold between worlds where boundaries are intentionally ambiguous (Crosby, 2009). The personal transformative magic happens through art, when creation is ignited within liminal spaces, in other words, nepantla. Pocha Nostra, a Chicano-Mexicano performance troupe I had a residency with, works with *Nepantla*. The Pocha Nostra performance pedagogy is rooted in radical tenderness, which strives for gentleness in the process of navigating ambiguity and liminality, and something that I have incorporated into my own work.



Chapter 2: Creative Braiding: Fluye

Practicing Tlacuila Neplantera in Costa Rica

Abya Yala *noun* \ 'aβja 'jala \ Kuna language meaning flourishing land or land of vital blood used refer to the American continent

fluye *noun* \ 'fluje \ flow

taller *noun* \ ta' ðer \ workshop

artesanxs *noun* \ ar' tesankss \ artisans

Amaca *noun* \ a' maka \ hammock

Amate *noun* \ a' mate \ It is a form of bark paper used for communication, records and ritual that the Otomi Indigenous people from Mexico developed, and was adopted in the 1960's by the Nahua people. The production of the *Amate* was mostly banned with Spanish colonization (Flores, p.17; 2003).

*Me despierta un coro de voces
gallos cantando con sentido de urgencia
a diestra y siniestra
uno a uno se van pisando las notas
los grillos y las chicharras
ninguno se queda atrás*

*to edit out, to silence out
to let the absence of noise
reach the river*

*to flow silence
provides fecundity*

Fluye & Cocoons Arts Epistemology

There had been a long disjuncture between my scholar identity, my artistic self, and my activist self. My identity had been compartmentalized. My plan through my graduate studies was to unify my multiple identities and have my work resonate with who I am within and beyond academia. According to Leavy, 'holistic approaches to research are not only about the epistemology-theory-methods nexus, but also the relationship the researcher has with his or her work' (2009, p. Viii). In this vein, I centered on engaging in several art forms with the purpose of understanding myself and who I was becoming. I found ways in which all forms could be integrated with each other, instead of having to choose one over others. Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire* ignited my embodied journey and supported a rethinking of disciplinary boundaries in art, academia, and within my multiple identities (2003). The problem was that I had not paid enough attention to my body as a source of knowledge, both in my artistic practice and throughout my previous formal education. I was reminded that there has been a preference for written culture over oral tradition as a way of knowing since the arrival of the Europeans to the Americas; compounded with the virtual age that still eludes embodiment (Taylor, 2003, p. 16; Rivera Ayala, 2009). With this awareness, I had to decenter the historical role of writing and commit to a shift in my methodologies to support embodiment. According to Taylor, 'embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing...an epistemology' (Taylor, 2003, p. 3). Taylor informed my decision to revalue my creative and scholarly writing as a sacred activity that is tied to performance, much like my Aztec ancestors with their writing and performance of codices, and *amate* paintings on paper (Flores, p.17; 2003). Therefore, I chose to employ a design that had combined performance with poetry in the *Fluye* and *Cocoons* projects. As I became acquainted with the projects with my own integrity, I was forced to carve out my own identifier, my own nomenclature. Consequently, I started identifying as *Tlacuila Nepantlera* and playing with transdisciplinary art methods connecting poetry, photography, painting and performance. Transdisciplinarity defined as a process of integrating diverse art forms, both archival and embodied, with transformation within its foundation. It is similar to an interdisciplinarity approach of bringing disciplines together with their unique elements, epistemologies and knowledges but has holistic value that is intensified further.

Supported by performance theory, I began with listening to my body; to have conversations with my grandmother and great-grandmothers through cooking with corn and through the interpretation of dreams. I paid attention to oral tradition and the repertoire. Cooking, dancing, rituals, and creating performances became a way of knowing my family history, and studying myself. I came to understand that 'Performance and aesthetics of everyday life vary from community to community, reflecting cultural and historical specificity as much in the enactment as in the viewing/reception' (Taylor, 2003, p.

4). I realized, for example, that in the process of cooking tortillas is a thousand-years of connection with corn, as it was also a connection with my grandmother and her telling of stories, history and her-stories. I came to understand that her experience with corn was of growing, cooking and storytelling while mine was of cultural reclamation and artistic creation with a Diasporic connection. In my study of cacao for the performance *Red Surrender*, I experienced a similar relationship. I realized that the women in the family had a fascination, if not an obsession, with chocolate. I started to pay attention to the ways I engaged with Cacao. I traced cacao's early history within the Indigenous peoples, like the Olmecas, Maya and Mexica. I also learned of its uses in healing particularly in divination as an individual act which involves interpretation of dreams or the observation of omens (Tedlock, 2005, pg 25); and ritual within Mayan and Mexica cultural and shamanistic practices. For example, cacao as a sacred seed is smoked and used for birth and death rituals by the Kuna people of Panama (Alemancia in Barndt 2011). González Gómez taught me that in Mesoamerica, cacao is seen as the blood that runs through our bodies (personal communication, 2015). I learnt that cacao, or 'kakaw' has been a prominent drink and medicine for the Maya and included in the Popol Vuh, the ancient text of the Maya People (Ibid.). The beautiful revelation was that cacao and corn, both sacred plants, are part of me; my body is made of corn and through my veins runs cacao.



Fluye's Initial purpose

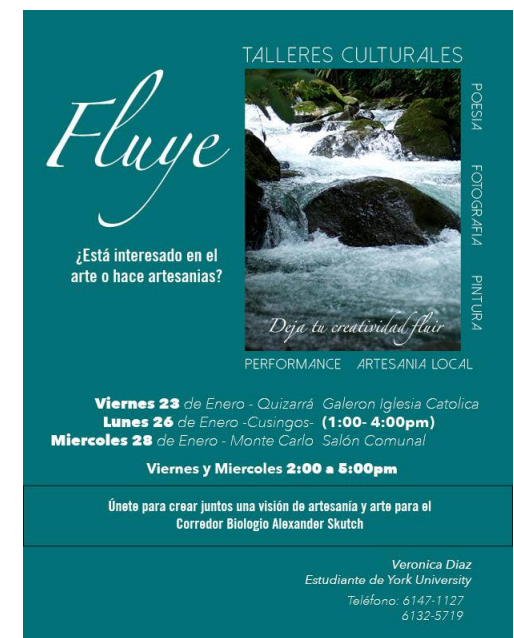
Fluye started with the purpose of providing a creative space for women from the small rural towns of Quizarra, Santa Helena and Montecarlo which forms part of the Biological Corridor of Alexander Skutch where York University's Las Nubes Project is located. This project was looking to fill the need for artistic and cultural activities in the area. Likewise, I hoped it would provide a framework to produce collective art with poetry, painting and performance; to dwell in the meaning of rivers; and to explore intuition and the erotic as defined by Lorde as “a reserve of energy, information and power that is grounded in ourselves as strongly female and spiritual, its strength deriving from the implicit and (un)recognized feelings” (1984, p.54). Another description by Lorde of the erotic that grounded *Fluye* (as well as *Cocoons*) is in the following:

When I speak of the erotic, then I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives (1984, p. 56).

The participants in the *Fluye* workshops and myself explored the erotic as defined by Lorde in relation to the experiencing of life, rivers, and our own rejected and suppressed emotions. It also inspired hidden stories to emerge and new ways to tell stories which are not reflected in mass media and dominant culture.

Fluye Design

Throughout this Chapter, I will be describing how my decolonial art practice developed in the warm lands of Abya Yala. As well as the artistic methods utilized and the themes explored within *Fluye*. I would like to start by sharing that it was my intention to bring the true meaning and power of the erotic into art practice in Costa Rica. The erotic as defined earlier by Lorde as well as what Snowber describes as the notion of desire, 'the desire for longing, the desire for knowledge, the desire to feel the wind (2006 p.79). I brought these meanings of the erotic into the *Fluye Talleres* (workshops) and into other activities within *Cocoons* in the form of writing poetry, researching cultural knowledge, and engaging in conversations. As well, my purpose was to explore the potential of the erotic as a dynamic force of creativity. Just like Lorde and Snowber, I believe that it is through our desires that we can complete our visions (1984. p. 57; 2006, p. 79). The artistic projects gave space for the erotic to fulfill visions. For



the following sessions, we came together with our desires and emotions out in the open which helped us create a collective vision. *Fluye* from its beginnings had the potential to form an artisan collective that provides additional creative and economic support.

Transdisciplinarity & Nepantla

My goal as the lead artist of *Fluye* was to practice as a *Tlacuila Nepantlera*; this meant applying key concepts in planning *Fluye* as a facilitator of *Nepantla* in collectivity and within solo work. *Nepantla* is a liminal creative ground for crossing boundaries, radical possibilities and collective transformation. Anzaldúa mentioned that “*Nepantla* is a Nahuatl word for the space between two bodies of water, the space between two worlds. It is a limited space, a space where you are not this or that but where you are changing. You haven’t got into the new identity yet and haven’t left the old identity behind either—you are in a kind of transition” (“Interview” 237). *Fluye* facilitated the possibility for questioning old and new identities through creativity, conversations, and relationships created in art-making. *Fluye* also provided a framework for experimentation. My role in *Fluye* was to facilitate *Nepantla* as a space and as a bridge between art forms and between participants. It is meant to constantly invite people to explore transdisciplinarity as a creative framework within the workshops and facilitated *Nepantla* in *Fluye*. For example, we engaged with performance, watercolours, sound ecology, and poetry (Smith 2012). By doing so, performance first connected us to our bodies, emotions, and inspired stories (Taylor, 2013; Schechner, 2006); the watercolours reminded us about our childhood homes and memories (Pink 2011); the sound walks then reminded us of our interconnection to Mother Earth and how her sounds are a source of inspiration for new insights about ourselves and the world (Schine, 2010); and finally, poetry allowed us to share and give a space to personal voices (Leavy, 2003). All forms intermingled and fed each other in the workshops. We also worked across the boundaries of each form while discussing meaningful topics. I confirmed what Lorde taught me that ‘the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.’ (Lorde, 1984, p. 57). While the *Fluye* participants, most of which were women, created together I could see how they risked and embodied new forms of creation. I saw how they were shy and reluctant to believe they could write. Nevertheless, they engaged in the activities and ended up writing something meaningful. Their age difference did not matter, neither did their creative expertise. They gained new perspectives of themselves while practicing performance exercises. For example, Eunice, a visual artist told me that she did not consider herself an artist, but a crafts woman, because she believed that an artist creates from personal inspiration and she created her paintings by copying images from a book. After the second workshop, she said that through the performance and the sound walks she was able to hear her own creative voice for the very first time.

This was a joy to hear. It was an honour to have witnessed this intimate self-discovery as facilitator of Nepantla. Her own perspective of herself as a creative being morphed and her artistic capacity changed to embrace a new desire to tell her own stories.

I practiced as a Tlacuila-Nepantlera, starting with the following questions:

How can I effectively integrate art forms, both archival and embodied? What strategies and approaches can promote Transdisciplinary art creation and Transdisciplinary art forms as identity-forming and reinvention? What are the creative processes that integrate decolonization into cultural reclamation, which nurtures place making, ancestral healing, and recovery of cultural histories? How can I use ritual, imagination and myth for transformation and decolonization?

What: Visioning

In the very beginning, January 14th 2015, after living in Longo Mai, I moved to Quizarra with the Vargas family. There, I planned the cultural workshops project with two young community leaders and sisters named Mariana Vargas and Yahaira Vargas. I first met them when I traveled in May 2014 with the York University Field Course in Costa Rica. They both showed a deep interest in being involved in the *Fluye* project. It was important for me to have them present from the initial stages of the project. We connected through Skype and social media where our relationship formed organically. According to Indigenous research methods and Popular Education, relationships are at the core of collective work (Smith 2012, Freire 2000). This was true. Mariana and Yahaira helped me shape the *Fluye* proposal and in exchange I supported them with an educational video on rivers and water rights of a contemporary dance which was filmed during my stay in May. Together, on a January warm day, we discussed the initial plan and vision for the *Fluye* project. We talked for hours and at the end of our visioning, the project was reconfigured with their suggestions to adjust to the realities and urgencies of the local people which addressed different age groups, the dates and timing of sessions, the outreach strategy, and the format.

After receiving Mariana and Yahaira's phenomenal counsel, we consulted with visual artist Candy Vásquez and the Alexander Skutch Annual Festival planning group. The purpose of the art workshops solidified. After talking to Candy, the emphasis was placed heavily on creating a network of artists and artisans that could create a community vision of the Biological Corridor's fine arts and crafts. We then spoke to Wendy Valverde, an environmental community leader who agreed with the objectives we had identified and finalized after Candy's consulting meeting. These are the following objectives:

- a) self exploration through transdisciplinarity
- b) use of intuition in the creative process
- c) exploring personal connections to rivers
- d) building relationships and a network of artists and artisans to create a community vision of the Biological Corridor's fine arts and crafts

How: Methods

I used participatory action research (PAR; a pluralistic, collective and action-oriented approach to knowledge making and social change) adapting four features of community arts methodology: 1) Collaboration: drawing on personal experience, knowledge, and resources; 2) Creativity: nurturing our imaginations and diverse artistic passions, media, and skills; 3) Critical: promoting critical anti-oppression analysis, self-reflexivity, and ongoing feedback/evaluation; 4) Commitment: articulating our positions, embracing differences, and addressing conflicts respectfully (Barndt, 2011). I also followed Popular Education pedagogy with Freirean principles, claiming that education is not neutral, it must start with the experiences and perceptions of the learners, the content should be drawn from daily lives, the teachers are learners, and learners are teachers (Freire, 2000).

Changes

I had planned for a larger project with three separate intimate community workshops series each rooted in a community. Mariana and Yahaira made me see that even as a team we could not support the building of deep relationships in each community one by one to create meaningful art. Instead we decided to build relationships with lead artists of the diverse communities and host just one workshop series. Shortly after, I arranged to meet with artists Candy Vásquez, Sharky and Wendy Valverde. I also started to plan for a single project with three *talleres*, or an English session open to whom ever was interested in doing art and who lived within in the eight communities. At the end we extended the project to have one more *taller* and an additional closing session. Enthusiasm and desire extended the gatherings into a total of five sessions the artisans wanted to learn more techniques. Thankfully we had enough time to prepare. The first *Taller* was planned to be Quizarra, the second in Santa Helena and the third in Montecarlo. It had to realize that I had ambitious and unrealistic goals, and so we modified the project. The workshops became more grounded in the community and the name was changed to *Fluye* from TCAP (Transdisciplinary Community Arts Project). In Spanish, Fluye means “flow” reflecting the flow of water, emotions, and stories. It represented the essence and theme of rivers and the intended exploration of intuition through art creation (Schine, 2010). It made sense to still keep the

focus on rivers as a main anchor. There is an ongoing struggle to defend their two rivers Peñas Blancas and Peñas Blanquitas. The fight against the hydroelectric dam in the community was still a tender topic. Many of these artisans were active in the resistance movement with the name of *Rios Vivos*, or living rivers. The name *Fluye* intended to also represent their water struggles and their deep love for Mother Earth. The rivers themselves became metaphors, referring to the flowing characteristic of creativity and imagination.

What: Talleres

Taller 1: Quizarra (Monday, January 23)

Taller 2: Cusingos (Wednesday, January 26)

Taller 3: Montecarlo (Friday, January 28)

*Taller 4: Peñas Blancas (Wednesday,
February 4)*

*Taller 5: Closing Session in Quizarra
(Friday, February 7)*



Taller 1: Quizarra (Monday, January 23)

The first workshop was in Quizarra in the Church's community space. It was attended by around 25 eager participants of different ages, mostly women, two men, some kids and teens -all engaged were people from the eight communities from the Biological Corridos, also known as the COBAS community. For this first session, I prepared performance exercises based on Theatre of The Oppressed and Pocha Nostra techniques to explore this form as a way to reconnect to our bodies and emotions. I also focused on using Performance as a way to transmit social knowledge, tap memory, make political claims, and manifest a group's sense of identity (Taylor, 2003). In that manner, I engaged with voice and movement as a form of inquiry into their identity with rivers, and as data collection of self and community related to creativity.

We also engaged with poetry (see workshop design appendix B) because I wanted to focus on offering a Transdisciplinary experience. I used poetry because it is a form that captures moments, truths, human conditions, and the vitality of those moments (Leavy, 2009). I believed it would be great to have poetry capture some of the emotions that came out from the performance exercises. The idea was to engage in a writing exercise of randomly written words which came spontaneously to participants as a way of exercising trust of their impulses and internal voice. They then wrote a piece with one of the previously written words. For Faulkner, poetry mirrors the complexity of identity and goes beyond narrow descriptions of self or our 'shifting nature' (2006, p.99). I observed that poetry was able to capture the participants' identities by engaging with silence, language and emotions. In their poetry, I was witness to their fears, dreams, and emotions which likewise emerged throughout *Fluye*. *Fluye* was able to capture a snapshot of their personal connection to the rivers, their artistic visions for an artistic collection, their perceptions of self, and their deep earth-based spirituality. I had the honour of learning important elements of their worldviews, such as the level of animism portrayed in their poetry, and their belief that non-human entities such as animals, plants, and inanimate objects possess a spiritual essence. The following is an excerpt of El Gavilán-Aguila. A poem by Candy created in *Fluye Talleres* (see translation in appendix D):

El gavilán - águila

*Suena y suena no lo sé porque
solo sé que no lo puedo lograr
pero sí pero sí lo hare
Caminaré en el sendero oscuro y las ramas recuperé.
Mientras sueño y no lo veo
camino eso haré
Es como un río tranquilo y sediento,
que en la vereda vió la luz
es como el agua que bebas.
Quiero verte iluminar
Mientras miro y no escucho,
vivo y no vivo,
sueño y no creo
entiendo mientras creo verme al fin volar.*

Candy

The Hawk – Eagle

*Sounds and sounds
I do not know why
I just know it is hard to achieve
but yes, I will do
I walk in the dark path and the branches I will recover.
While I sleep and do not see it
walk I will do
It is like a river peaceful and thirsty,
that in the road the light was shown
it is like the water you drink.
I want to see you illuminate,
as I look and do not listen,
alive and not alive,
dream and do not believe
I understand while I find myself finally fly.*

Candy

We completed the workshop with watercolours because some of the participants had come specifically for that (learning about it from the invitation posters). The session was planned to flow and change as needed. I was unsure if we would get to the watercolours and since they mentioned their interest during our check in, I made sure to make the time for watercolours. I was prepared with support materials and some examples I had prepared with Yahaira the previous night. I encouraged everyone to allow the previous art forms and what they offered to inspire the watercolours. The focus was to braid the forms, the ideas, and the emotions.

One issue was the accessibility of the location of future sessions. The communities are relatively close together if you own a car or a motor bike. But if you do not, walking is the only option. Many of the women have to walk around 30 to 45 minutes to the neighbouring community. Transportation is an issue in the COBAS community. For this reason, the workshops were designed in a drop-in fashion, to have an open invitation to whomever could make it, or find a mode of transportation. The final session was organized in Quizarra as it was the most accessible location to all.

Taller 2: Cusingos (Wednesday, January 26) My plan for this session was to start with performance exercises followed by a sound walk and finish with poetry. I had realized the previous session that embodied art worked well with poetic writing. The art forms developed a thread of stories and emotions. I found that the watercolours started new stories and feelings. So, I decided to focus on performance and poetry, while also introducing sound walks (another embodied form) and braid them together.





The *Taller Cusingos* was my favourite because we had intimate conversations and everyone challenged themselves. We also engaged in liminality through the use of embodied forms and poetry. There were around twelve women in the circle. We started with the body, with exercises from Pocha Nostra and Theatre of the Oppressed techniques (see workshop design in appendix A) which I had learnt from a workshop in San Isidro with a Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner. I used Image Theatre, which consists of nonverbal physical representations of ideas, themes, and situations using the body and gestures (Bogad, 2006, p. 49). According to Bogad, "Image Theatre can help bring people together, in a common space, to creatively, nonverbally, and dialogically express and develop their perceptions of their world, power structures, and oppressions" (2006, p.49). The Theatre of the Oppressed encouraged them to break away from the learner-teacher dichotomy. Many had come in to the workshops with the prescribed format of the 'teacher' as a technical instructor and themselves as only students. The exercises broke away from the hierarchical structures as we all took turns suggesting moves and proposing themes.

In this second workshop, I wanted to continue exploring their connection to Mother Earth and animism. I invited participants to explore their connections to rivers and other non-human species through their bodies. Therefore, these workshops explored 'body-fullness' a term introduced to me by Mora Campbell. It is about possessing a body awareness that is related to the erotic connection to our selves and the imagination (personal communication, August, 2014). To be body-aware meant that participants would connect with their senses and have the body be part of their creative process. This worked well, as they created static and/ moving images looking at the sounds of the forests, the spirit of the rivers, the roles of insects. This understanding was crucial when moving into introspective sound walks since there needs to be a full awareness of their auditory senses and their presence in the forest. It also allowed for participants to begin viewing themselves as intrinsically creative individuals who are imbedded in the land.





I included sound ecology (Schine, 2010) and sound walks (Solnit, 2000; Davis Halifax, 2004) in the *Cusingos Taller* because I had seen the benefits of this activity when I started a river walk practice in 2014. The meaning placed on walking makes it more than just a universal act, it can become a meditative ritual invested with wildly different cultural meanings, from the erotic to the spiritual, from the revolutionary to the artistic (Solnit, 2000). Wandering through the forests, jungles and streets allowed me to study my own built perception of self in contrast to place. In a similar manner, participants engaged in an exploration of body-fullness. Connecting and identifying with the space by using the senses. We paid close attention to the sounds, the patterns, the textures, the different insects, the colours, the temperatures. They were invited to be present and notice what their body was experiencing in that moment. They later responded to a 'free write' writing exercise. This activity consisted of making a list of three sounds that had made an impact, or provoked an emotional reaction during their walk, followed by a free flow of writing. Schine taught me to recognize that an acoustic community is formed by the sounds of a particular locality (2010). Sound is basic to a landscape's identity and deepens the relationship between us and the land. The participants then chose a sound from their list to inspire a free write.

When we returned to our room, I had presented a small lecture on poetic devices and form (see workshop design appendix A). The women had time to look at their writing from the sound walk and use the poetic devices to write a poem. They shared their poetry and experiences while we had food since it was the time of *cafe, or coffee* time, a Costa Rican small meal before supper. The poetry written in this second *Taller* was as Leavy describes poetry, "a vivid and sensory scene that compels the reader, teaching an aspect of social experience" (2009, p.70). The women captured their experiences and their relationship to the tropical forest, rivers and rocks. This is illustrated in the following poem by Raquel a participant who captured the experience of the sound walk with her own thoughts, feelings and imagination.

*Los pasos que saben
así donde van son pasos,
con guía y intuición.
Los pasos sin saber así donde vas
son pasos del destino sin rumbo y con sorpresas.
El sonido del canto de las aves,
chicharras que riman como gotas que caen del mismísimo cielo.
El viento que transmite libertad, dejarse volar y hasta las nubes tocar.*

*El silencio de la montaña que llena tu alma y corazón, de tranquilidad, de repente el burrumbun del río,
de las rocas que impacta
y mi corazón saboreando
el agua sin poder tomarla.*

(see English translation in appendix E)

The feedback was very positive. Another participant, Mariana, mentioned that the activities were exactly what she needed in the moment. She enjoyed spending time writing on rocks and listening to the river pass. And finished by saying that the amount of inspiration was immeasurable.

Taller 3: Montecarlo (Wednesday, January 28)



For this workshop, Yahaira and myself planned it very closely. She was getting more comfortable with the planning process and I learned that it is better for me to have someone to work ideas with. And so, together we decided to follow the same structure and start with performance.

This day in *Taller Montecarlo* allowed me to test my ability as a facilitator for improvisation and flexibility, mostly because of shyness of some adults and a few kids. The beginning performance exercises did not work that well with this group because the exercise demanded a lot of risk through physical movement and spotlight moments. I decided to use theatre exercises from the Theatre of the Oppressed which resulted in being less intimidating and with de-centralized focus. Being embodied through these exercises brought out experimentation and play through the use of gestures and body movements. But most importantly, the style had participants mention that they had been able to know new things about themselves. One was, the need of play and imagination in their lives. It was nice to see they gain personal insights and still took risks.

Our goal for this session was to add watercolour, since participants requested more visual art in the *Taller Cusingo*. Participants in *Taller Montercarlo* likewise desired more watercolour techniques when I checked in during the middle of the workshop. I noticed I was feeling uncomfortable with this request as I was myself a beginner in watercolour. Despite the discomfort, I decided to follow the learner-teacher framework of Theatre of the Oppressed and opened the space for other painters in the room to show examples for others to follow, ie. Candy shared her painting skills.

Prior to the watercolours, I invited participants to do visual exercises one of which was 'exquisite corpse', a surrealist exercise which explores imagination and collaborative improvisation. Participants were asked to free draw on a sheet of paper, fold it to conceal the content and pass it on to the next player for his/her contribution, and on ward. The next person receives the paper with a bit of information to feed the free drawing. This exercise allows a person to be random, be playful and even silly. I saw how participants were exploring their creativity and might experience the meaning of an ensemble work.

This was to be the final workshop of the initial plan and my goal was to close the *Fluye* workshop series with a ritual. One of the participants Raquel Mora, invited us to her house for the closing. She had a little pond where we had planned a closing ceremony. At this time the participants, Yahaira and myself decided that this could not be the final workshop. Instead, we toured the beautiful grounds as we planned the future of *Fluye*. We decided to have

one more workshop next the *Peñas Blancas* river with poetry and painting and then have an additional closing session. In total, *Fluye* finished with five sessions instead of three.

Taller 4: *Peñas Blancas*

One of the women artists, Candy introduced me to Rick, an American who owns land next to the *Peñas Blancas* river. He was happy to have us in his space. It was a wonderful workshop with kids, teenagers, and women. I guided a meditation which was an inspiration to write poetry. We then worked on rock petroglyphic painting as I had been doing research for the *Cocoons* project. I shared photos of the petroglyphs and spoke about my new found relationship with rocks. We all discussed their individual relationships to them and the ancient possible uses and meanings of the designs. Augusto Boal talks about how theatre, and art in general tells stories and shines light on oppressions and social realities (Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 2006). There was a lack of knowledge of petroglyphs among some of the participants which revealed the erasure of histories of the land and the indigenous people. We had conversations on the history of colonization, and ways that knowledge was purposely erased. We touched on themes of power in relation to access to land as *campesinos*, *mestizos*, or as descendants from farm settlers. I also noticed the need to break stereotypes of indigenous people and the internalized racisms. I decided to invite Christian González Gómez to share the legends and information on the rocks and cultural knowledge for the closing session.



Taller 5: Closing Session in Quizarra

For the closing session, following community arts principles, I invited other artists to share their skills. I had seen how it had worked well with Candy. Raquel facilitated a Belly Dancing workshop. There was a discussion of future work and the forming of a network. Candy, Raquel, Cecilia, Mariana and Yahaira all decided to keep the spirit of *Fluye* going, and I offered organizational support from Canada in the next few following months. I began a Facebook group and coordinated the first meeting. Furthermore, there had been a lot of interest in petroglyphs all throughout *Fluye* however there was a lack of information on indigenous knowledge and on the history of the land. Christian, a young Indigenous Boruca cultural and tourism leader, gave a small lecture on *Boruca/Brunka* Indigenous stories and cultural knowledge on the rocks and rivers. He was able to represent the absent stories and to fill in the void of history and meaning. Brunka people are one of the few indigenous nations in Costa Rica, and the only ones who live on their ancestral land. Through a beautiful talk on oral traditions and storytelling, Christian shared valuable knowledge on the Costa Rican petroglyphs, their symbolisms and iconography.

It was lovely session. I had met a York University student earlier in the week and invited him to this closing workshop. He arrived with eight other university students from the capital city or *San Isidro*, having the goal of opening the last session to the outer community.



While there were differences in occupations and location of residence between students and community members, the shared common interest in rivers and rocks brought them together. The COBAS folk offered their own stories of supernatural beings. I prepared an intimate closing ritual, which was joined by everyone. It was a beautiful closing moment where we honoured the rivers, the rocks, the land, the *Fluye* people, and the relationships we had built.





What: *Rio y Rocas Poetry Book*

Through community art and popular education methodologies, the process and products generated from the *Talleres* became the focus for the final creation of the *Rios y Rocas* (River and Rocks) poetry book). I followed a similar focus as the 'Painting by Listening' mural process directed by Sergio Valdez Rucalcaba in a *Zapatista* community in Mexico in stimulating *Fluye* groups' artistic expression. In the words of Valdez Rucalcaba, "it is possible to tap the talents and potential of ordinary people to produce murals in their localities that express their identities and social concerns" (2011, p. 105). In the case of *Fluye*, the creative Transdisciplinary art allowed people (artisans, creative people or anybody who wanted to be part of the project) to express their hidden voices and stories through embodied, writing, and painting. We produced a book of poetry and paintings called *Rio y Rocas* (see appendix H). I believe I encouraged the COBAS community to identify and confirm their own qualities and artistic needs, as well as their social needs. Many of them wanted to keep meeting, expressing that they found that the time together creating art and learning new techniques was something essential to their lives. They saw the potential to teach each other the skills they already possessed. I am glad they adapted the interchangeable teacher/learner model. For example, Raquel mentioned she wanted to continue teaching dance to adults as she usually teaches kids. Candy wanted to share her paint technique. I was also happy to facilitate the development of their artistic skills through performance, poetry and watercolour. Candy for example shared with us that she wanted to take more technique practices to improve her painting. They also mentioned they wanted to take time in their day for self reflection, writing, and listening to their own creative voice. Rachel shared with us that there was a need for regularly scheduled gatherings, as well as random creative gatherings. She liked what we did in *Fluye* with improvisation and randomness like with the theatre exercises. The *Talleres* also gave the space to talk about spiritual and political connections to their rivers. Initially, I expected to have talks about *Rios Vivos* and the hydroelectric struggle. However most participants talked about their personal connection to them, and their duty to take care of their health for their whole lives. They did not focus on the immediate situation, but as a constant struggle. Others expressed that rivers are alive and are places of healing.

The *Fluye Talleres* were casual. I felt that we did not explore certain topics extensively, as I had envisioned in the earlier stages. There were new people every time and it was welcoming anyway. Not having a steady group did not create enough time or trust to sustain very intimate conversations on domestic violence, mental health, addictions, and forced migrations to the United States. But the art work itself created relationships and intimacy. I built beautiful relationships with individuals who came into all the workshops. I had meaningful conversations outside of the workshops made possible by the experience of *Fluye*.



Chapter 3: Red Butterfly Body and Soul: Cocoons

An art practice that integrates spirituality, mother earth and culture

te veo y te reconozco *phrase* \te 'βeo i te reko 'noθko \ I see you and I recognize you

alas rasgadas *noun & adjective* \ 'alas raz 'yaðas \ scratched wings

tecilli *noun* \ te 'θi:li \ capullo de mariposa/ butterfly cocoon in Nahuatl

papalotl istak *noun & adjective* \papa 'lotl is 'tak \ mariposa blanca in Nahuatl\ white butterfly



Cocoons started as an autoethnographic transdisciplinary-transnational arts-based research project on my own personal transformation and study of my *Tlacuila Nepantlera* practice which is a creative identity that across disciplines (poetry, performance, photography and painting); engages between worlds, of languages, boundaries, borders and its goal is to decolonize, heal and transform. It has been a process that can be described as periods of transformation in three main phases or cocoons: a) radical love, b) red path, and c) divine feminine. In short, I engaged with the power of the erotic, queer futurity, mystic femininity, womanhood, and the divine feminine. In combination with the *Nahua* and *Cora* indigenous cosmology and philosophy and my *mestiza* history, I resisted the models prescribed by the mainstream society while finding, reclaiming, and giving birth to myself.

Cocoons became a process of developing a decolonial art practice that intersects *mestiza* and indigenous art traditions with contemporary Mexican Canadian culture. My process and creative work exists within the realms of Aztec and Cora ancient and current philosophy, traditional iconography, and legends. I see my *Tlacuila Nepantlera* practice as one that explores myth, family stories, spirituality and looks to build my own contemporary *mestiza*-indigenous artistic methodology and aesthetic.

sending you sunshine and heat from Costa Rica
a forest in front of me sits quietly
while I'm the guardian of some crops in a rustic house
while the chickens are running around
a corn field grows with the moons
translucent at the back
and a forest proud in the front of me sits.

Red Path Cocoon

Being a Tlacuila-Nepantlera means committing to the *Camino Rojo*, or the Red Path. I was exposed to this concept in Costa Rica. I saw artists who are living examples of what it means to embody the Camino Rojo. The first artist I met was Guadalupe Urbina, a model of an artist who is fully in the Camino Rojo; there I also met a herbal healer Jennifer González Zamora, as well as prehispanic musician Paloma Coronado Manrique. The term is connected to the Red Road indigenous movement of the 70's. To these women, the Camino Rojo “es el camino de los abuelitos y las abuelitas,” the way of our grandparents that teaches us about maintaining respect and a relationship with Mother Earth and all the elements, recognizing that they are alive. (Paloma Coronado, personal communication, February 2015). It is about the recognition that there are more than the living dimensions, and grandparents know how to communicate through ritual and ceremony communicating with the dead and the spirit realm (Ibid.). It is the best term I have found to describe my decolonial way of being, of walking on this earth, as a human, a healer and an artist, by looking at the Earth as our mother, and connecting to everything - the rivers, the animals as spirit guides, cacao, and the soil as inspiration. In acknowledging and committing to the Camino Rojo, I furthered developed my art methodology. Specifically, my earth-based spiritual practice has nurtured my art through the use of dreams. I refer to dreams as 'a crossroads location, halfway between the world of the senses and the world of intuitive understanding', as detailed by Barbara Tedlock (2005, p. 104). My dreams feed my narratives such as with the development of Red Surrender. While in Costa Rica, I visited free flowing rivers daily. I stayed still while the water ran free around me. Like a rock, I allowed myself to listen and receive their messages. Both relationships I have with rivers and cacao are based on listening, informing, finding interpretations which inspires my art. The Red Path and being a Tlacuila-Nepantlera has become part of my art and cultural practice.

Art Residency at Longo Mai – Centro de Arte y Buen Vivir

On January 6-14, 2015, I spent a week with Guadalupe Urbina in the *Centro de Arte y Buen Vivir*, or Centre of Good Living in Longo Mai. Longo Mai is a beautiful place that holds people with many stories and diverse origins. Decades ago it welcomed first Nicaraguans and later Salvadoreans who were at risk because of their political orientations (Fonte 2015). Urbina is a world renown folk singer-songwriter, poet and painter who works on indigenous and rural cultural identity and shares her creativity with others. She developed the Centre called Centro de Arte y Buen Vivir where she works with kids on developing self-esteem, creative observation skills and her love for the land through theatre, music, and art. For all the good work that she has done and continues to do, she is considered a living cultural hero (Fonte 2015).

My time there was foundational for my being as well as for my projects in Costa Rica. It informed the political and social context of Longo Mai as well as the Southern Region of Costa Rica including the eight communities of *Fluye*. I also learned the role of Latina artists in transformation. Urbina's work with the Longo Mai community, particularly with children and their mothers, was a perfect example of personal and collective transformation. I worked with the children on a feather project and assisted by providing my photography skills to document their collection of feathers. The photos became content to be used as educational tools for their workshops and could possibly be used for raising funds.



Working closely with Guadalupe was a gift. I saw first hand her impact, the messiness of the work, the challenges of living alone as a woman in a jungle, the rewarding work, and the difficulty of pushing through the resistance of conservative thought. For example, we heard that there were two young men who wanted to break in. It was petrifying. She explained that she had to build herself a reputation as a strong fierce woman in order to live safely, alone. One evening we heard her two guardian dogs barking late one night. Guadalupe came out screaming at the men. We just heard them running away.

She provided counsel in my project and my *Tlacuila Nepantlera* practice as a model. Her experience of living from the land and having spiritual artistic relationship with rivers, rocks, plants and ancestral culture made her advice potent. She is not only a cultural leader and world-renowned musician, she also grows her food organically utilizing permaculture and bio-dynamic organic methods. She specifically, researches oral stories and old songs from her black, indigenous and Spanish roots. It was inspiring to see someone who lives and breathes her *mestiza* identity. Being next to Guadalupe Urbina, I also learned the power of culture and Earth-based artistic spirituality. I attended a *Rios Vivos* gathering and had a close look to the river struggles and resistance movement. This gave me a preliminary knowledge of their connection to their living rivers. Being in Longo Mai was a supporting ground for the creation of a rhythm of life that connected me to the red path.

Divine Feminine Cocoon

Mystical Femininity

Cocoons is about mystical femininity, which I believe is something in me that is sacred and inherently powerful. It is the connection to female versions of self, womanhood, Goddess and spirituality. Mystical femininity, lives in the realm of the divine and the sacred which is what connects us to the universe, to each other, to our true essence, and to our purpose. But mystical femininity is also explored through myth, cultural practices, and personal manifestations. I focused on learning about an archetype, 'a potential being who exists in all of us and who, since the beginning of human history, has emerged in varying degrees into consciousness in the many and diverse cultural forms to which we apply the word *goddess* in the sense of female deity' (Leeming & Page, 1994, p. 3). I also explored the meaning and existence of the Great Mystery as a Goddess as opposed to God.⁹ Goddess can take contradictory and complex forms as a Child-Maiden, the Mother, or the Crone in any order or simultaneously (Leeming & Page, 1994). "She can be the universe itself, the source of all being, the sacred temple, the divine child, the Holy Virgin, the Earth Mother-nurturer, the destroyer, the femme fatale, the consort or mother of God, the willing participant in the castration of her husband, even the lover of her son" (Leeming & Page 1994 p4). She has no conventional borders and breaks away patriarchal conceptions of divinity. My purpose was to challenge the boundaries of male-dominant religions and patriarchal notions of womanhood and female spirituality. This connects to decolonization as patriarchy is a function of colonial rule.

Mystical femininity is about our female power. Through the development of my bio-mythic piece called *Red Surrender*, I continued learning Maya and Aztec ancestral indigenous cosmology. I was soon introduced to *Ixchel* and *Xochiquetzal*, goddesses of fertility, the erotic and sensuality. They appear in my work as an embodiment of the Sacred Feminine mostly in the maiden and mother archetypes, and a bit less of the crone as bearers of fertility, sensuality, and vitality. *Ixchel* is Goddess of love, fertility, the moon, and the waters. They called her "Lady Rainbow" and she is a healer, a shaman and a female warrior protector of the fertility of women. *Xochiquetzal* is a Goddess that is said to teach the world how to spin and weave, to paint and carve, and who would give people the secret of life and the pleasures of the body; she would become the spirit of change, very tied to butterflies and with the mystery of transformation (Leeming & Page, 1994, p. 43). *Red Surrender* was born from a dream.

⁹In the future I am interested in researching the concept of Great Mystery through *Nahua* philosophy which is a duality of female and male named *Ometeotl*.

I was woken up from a deep sleep.

It was my grandmother who had woken me. I started lucid dreaming.

I noticed that my whole apartment was filled with many woman of my family lineage.

Soon after, my grandmother started to cover me with gifts. They first felt like strength, courage, hope

One by one the woman of the room followed by placing more gifts upon me.

I had been covered with blankets of love and power, layers of strength, gentleness, courage, humbleness.... all this ritual seemed to me as a preparation for a long journey

Once they were done,

Another dream started

I could see my body, sections of my body, like frames from a film.

And I was gathering my own menstrual blood

Gathering it in a bowl

There was incense - copal¹⁰, other spices like Tumeric which I later found out from a later dream

and a purple fruit which I found out it was cacao

While I gathered the blood, I blessed the space, everything and myself

Then I started caressing my body while painting my body red

blood red. It was a loving ritual. An erotic powerful ceremony.

Soon enough, I woke up.



¹⁰ Copal is a name given to an aromatic tree resin employed in Mesoamerica as incense and other purposes (Stross 1997).

I believe this dream was related to the power of the erotic and menstruation. To re-establish my connection to my womanhood through a re-empowerment of the menstrual cycle.¹¹ According to Tedlock, a menstrual blood dream is a powerful image of the power of feminine blood magic as an ecstatic form of shamanic power (2005 p. 190). My dream relates to stories in Tedlock's recount of other healer's initiation dreams with bloody images all symbolically linked to a woman's shamanistic power to menstrual fluids (p188, 2005). I later discovered the purple fruit from the dream was actually cacao (from another dream where Palenque Mayan emperor named *Pakal* spoke to my sister). This discovery tied me to warmer lands, to the Maya, and it is the reason I started to study cacao. I also started to look into the colour red. Red as symbolic of blood, of fertility, of passion and the erotic. Through my research I found the Red Queen, an important figure in the *Palenque Mayan* settlement very close to the time when *Pakal* was ruler. I was mesmerized by her story. It was very symbolic that she was discovered with her body all in red with no name. The red body of the Red Queen and my dream inspired *Red Surrender's* character Jade, to cover her body with red in the last scene. The fact that she had no name also struck a chord, with the nameless women in my family and nameless indigenous blood.

I see mystical femininity as a path that I had to take for my survival and growth. To prescribe a greater value to womanhood¹² away from mainstream culture connections to sexual exploitation, inferiority, and away from negative personal experiences. I moved towards my feminine potential and capabilities. Like mentioned before, I explored my personal mystic femininity, womanhood, and the divine feminine in conjunction to the *Red Path*. I explored the ancient Aztec and Maya Goddesses. After much research, I realized their stories had been corrupted with patriarchal values. I could see wisdom, but they had been ingrained with sexist twists. While discussing this within a Watah residency session, d'bi young suggested to keep looking for more stories. I persisted and I

¹¹ I recognize not all woman bleed. This search is related to my own journey which includes painful menses.



Photography by Anique J. Jordan

realized that the Maya stories of *Ixchel* included elements of First Nations teachings. There was the medicine wheel, four directions, and the four colours of black, red, white and yellow mentioned. It was so lovely to see the connections not only through corn but mythologies and storytelling. That is when I came across White Buffalo Woman. She carried much pride, power and knowledge. Her story seemed impeccable and uninterrupted. It was inspiring and so White Buffalo Woman's story became as a reference of what *Xochiquetzal* and *Ixchel*'s stories could be.

This exploration of the divine and mystical femininity has been a journey through artistic creation and transformation. Thus, I have been creating through self-exploration, improvisation, playing with intuition and imagination, as well as mythical representations of powerful femininity. It was done simultaneously through performance, poetry, and visual art forms. Manifestations of this particularly are contained in characters of *Red Surrender* Performance and Visual Exhibit, like Jade, Red Woman, Sky Woman, and Seed Woman; developed at the Watah Theatre's artist residency in a place called Red Universe (see attached appendix G1 for script and appendix G2 for video of performance for more).



¹² This concept includes all female identified individuals, transwoman, womban, etc. I recognize that gender is non-binary and there are several manifestations of it, such as trans, gender fluid, genderqueer, etc.

Radical Love Cocoon

*I am petrified to write
but I am more terrified of being eternally invisible
Can I dance? O hacerte el performance?
it is this constant fear of words
fear of the written condemnation
of being out in the open
but worse, in your archives
while my blood drips and unites Las venas abiertas de América Latina¹³
a tidal wave of contradictions
and the haunting of future exiles
my obsession for validation for the ones I love
rivers of tears mixing languages
my voice is stuck, it is rotten*

It is paramount to constantly situate myself. I am perpetually reminded I am a Diasporic being which 'refers to the movement, migration, and or displacement of populations from common territory and shared heritage, ethnicity, or cultural origin, as well as processes through which groups claim and create multiple and diverse identities' (Barndt 2011). It means I am marked from moving to the North and tied to the consequences of being in a different

¹³

Las venas abiertas de América Latina is a book written by Eduardo Galeano. It is referenced as it connects to the history of my people and continent with an emphasis in what colonization caused and is still affecting.

place. It is from here that I dream, plan, act, and when I am back home in the places of my ancestry I am still tied to Diaspora. My decolonization process is a Diasporic one as well. I also acknowledge I do not live in a vacuum and that there are Nahua, Cora, Maya and other indigenous people who have continued their traditions. No one is static. As I slowly learn *Nahua* language, spirituality and myths, I am reminded that there are *Tlacuila* painters that continued in a historical ancestral tradition. I met Cecilia Rodriguez-Beaudoin, a Mexican artist studying and working in culture. She is working with *Tlacuilo* and *Tlacuila* painters from the state of Guerrero and so challenged my perceptions of time and tradition. I see that my identity is removed from the source and I am acting from a place of mourning, historical fragmentation, cultural recovery and decolonization.

The general goal in *Cocoons* was to engage in a very intimate manner with Aztec and Cora cosmology and spirituality. To let the origin and development of the universe according to Mexica and Cora traditions seep into my self, life and art. To also study the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence rooted in Mexica, Maya and Cora pre-Hispanic era and contemporary principles. For example, I was deliberate in the ways I was attaining knowledge and so gave preference to oral tradition through my epistemology. Also, through the production of *Red Surrender*, I attained and remembered philosophies and cosmologies. For example, not only through the learning of *Ixchel* and *Xochiquetzal* goddesses' previously mentioned, but also through my walks next to rivers, my petroglyph research where I realized there is so much knowledge still to learn. (see Appendix G1 for the script and the performance in the appendix G2.

Like a *morena*, dark skinned woman, I have to navigate race, even within my family. Through *Cocoons* I have looked into my self-esteem in relation to my skin colour. Inspired by Anzaldúa and Moraga's writing, I started looking at the separation between women because of the skin colour (see appendix I Soil Moves – Radical Love poem). My separation was with my mother. This pain has run so deep in me that it has shaped my life and self worth. “Too bad she is *morenita*” would be the phrase that haunted me. It would fill me with filth but empty my self-worth. And even when my mom mentioned that she loved my brown cinnamon colour to sooth me, she would still offend me. I felt she did not recognize the extent of my pain. But what haunted me more, was that I was made to feel foreign from my own mother, my (s)hero and role model. And what I regret, is being disappointed and angry when I was told I looked like my father because I didn’t want to be dark-skinned like him. It has been a process to unlearn the racist beauty standards and stories that fed a negative self-worth. But now, I miss my colour in the winter months and rejoice when I see it reunite me in the summer.

Another significant element of the radical love Cocoon is the concept of fluidity and queer futurity from Queer theory. According to Cathy Cohen, queer politics has served to reinforce simple dichotomies of heterosexual and everything “queer” and she believes that a new politic should emerge (1997). On the other hand, queerness and queer politics has a radical “ability to create a space in opposition to dominant norms, a space where transformational political work can begin” (Cohen, 1997. p.438). For example, by identifying with fluidity, a concept that rejects the rigidity and static categories of hegemonic sexuality one can create instead a continuum of sexual expressions (Ibid). Similar to this, is queer futurity, mentioned earlier. Muñoz provides a concept where queerness is a collectivity: a “fight plan for a collective political becoming,” and is transcendent “collective potentiality” (2009, p.1). Within *Cocoons* queerness has been what Muñoz refers to as a structuring and a creating of new worlds with new and better pleasures and with other ways of being in the world (2009). It is a utopic way of loving day by day, a theoretical and practical framework to redefine the archetypes, celebrate both the feminine and masculine in our bodies, spirits, minds and move us to a transformative future.

Moraga mentions that there must be a liberation of our spirituality in par with our sexual liberation, survival and resistance against subjugation (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 2002). The liberation of my spirit has come in the shape of the integration of my *mestiza* spirituality which is a racial and cultural phenomenon that has moved to claim indigenous ancestry and celebrates *mestizaje* (Delgadillo, 2011). Critical *mestizaje* embodies the struggle for power, place and personhood arising from histories of violence and resistance (Ibid). Spiritual *mestizaje* challenges key western dualisms: body/mind and spirit/matter. I have embodied a spiritual *mestizaje* which includes the consideration of inherited and invented practices honouring the sacred, recollection of home-centred religions, rituals and healing ceremonies, research and contemplation of significant indigenous deities (many female), exploration of love, and justice in addressing social inequalities, etc (Ibid). As part of *Cocoons*, I built my own spiritual framework supported by *Chicana* frameworks, the production of *Red Surrender*, and *camino rojo* artist I met in Costa Rica. As I practiced my spirituality, I allowed to connect with Mother earth. I listen to receive messages.

*butterfly,
spirit animal
te veo y te reconozco
You have appeared in times of transformation
in times of falling
in times when my wings were broken
alas rasgadas
in moments where pieces I couldn't then find
in dark times
tecilli
you fly suddenly
appear to me in cocoon times
papalotl istak
white butterflies in ghostly times
you remind me of the need to transform,
cocoon myself I should
tecilli
to surrender to the darkness of my transfiguration
mariposa you carry colours of the rainbow
reminders of prophecy
you give strength and assurance, you allow me to surrender
surrender to myself
to my own transfiguration
to always welcome the endless transformations*



Poetry was the only way in which I could communicate this pain. I use Butterflies as a metaphor for myself, as already mentioned, while the cocoons represent moments of growth, phases of painful and joyful transformation. I am a butterfly in spirit. Like the butterfly, I share the ability to move between the seen and unseen realms gracefully, joining both worlds together. Essentially a *nepantlera*, flying in between worlds, breaking boundaries and moulding new identities. Butterflies, like snakes, are considered symbols of new life because living souls burst forth from old skins or cocoons (Tedlock,

2005, p. 228). There is a *Mixtec* belief from Oaxaca, Mexico that certain places – caves, rivers, trees engender children whose souls are conceived and carried in the womb of their “real” mother, the earth. Later each is transferred to a human woman in the symbolic form of a butterfly. She nurtures this living being until it transforms into a human baby that she births (Tedlock, 2005 p. 228). I emphasize the importance of the multiple creations of self. Part of my decolonization process is to birth myself again and again.

Cocoons Methods

Decolonization and Poetry

I recognize that writing for me as a woman of colour in a Canadian context has and will always be coloured by migration, Diaspora, multilingual spaces, and the access to other women of colour. But I also know that there are some universal powerful elements of writing, for anybody; as human beings, but as female artists of colour, in the words of Anzaldúa, “we wield a pen as a tool, a weapon, a means of survival, a magic wand that will attract power, that will draw self-love into our bodies” (1981, p. 163). I use words, imagination and my body in performance and in creative exploration as tools of liberation, healing and self-awareness. For Anzaldúa, to write is an act of defiance for women of colour, as myself, we must 'reclaim our tongues' (Anzaldúa, 1981, p. 165). (see appendix F & I for my poetry) There is much work, many lines, to reweave radical love to all pores of my body and soul.

Poetry is communication and a response to life experiences, new knowledge, emotions, thoughts, injustice, love, and imagination; where word, sound, and space merge to articulate personal meaning and some agree that it can reach social meaning (Leavy, 2009, p. 64). For me poetry is a way of being, a lens, a process of finding self and meaning in the world. In the language of methods, it is inquiry, analysis and dissemination that challenges the fact-fiction dichotomy. I would approve it as a *Nepantla* art form. For Falkner, “poetry is an engaged method of writing that evokes emotions, promotes human connection and understanding, and may be politically charged” (2005). My poetry is indeed political as it is created for myself and for an audience that is constantly present in a struggle, in survival and in liberation. I often use poetry because it is the only way I can begin to describe the feelings, to disentangle the deep pain, to do justice to the stories buried deep within myself, new stories, or stories from ancestors waiting to be told. Poetry is an act that contradicts the silencing and the multiple assumptions – oppressions of generations of silence and repression. So indeed, it is urgent art, politically charged, and a healing form.

I use a mix of poetic methods including literature-voiced research poetry (Leavy, 2009) and autoethnography, or what I like to refer to as Anzaldúa's *autohistoria-teoria* and *autohistoria* method of writing poetry (Anzaldúa and Keating, 2013). The first method used throughout my studies was what is defined as literature-voiced research poetry, which uses literature as the source to create original poetry, where you synthesize, process, and make meaning of theories, and it informs your study (Leavy, 2009). As a poet, it was natural for me to use poetry to digest new concepts. Therefore, I created *River Journal*, responding poetically to texts on wellness, rivers and walking as a methodology, and other arts based research methods. My Chapbook "Soil Moves" was created as a response to literature on social movements, women of colour feminisms, and queer theory, see appendix I.

All Cocoons



This painting titled *Four Cocoons*, describes my *femmefesto*, my personal artistic declaration. It contains four elements of my practice that could describe my philosophical foundation. The top right contains my first cocoon, the red path cocoon. It has the design of the *Ojo de Dios* (cora: cha'anaka, huichol: tsikuri), or Eyes of God. This object was used to 'see' within rituals and represents the four directions (north, south, east, west). This is the Cocoon that reconnects

me to my indigenous ancestry, to search the hidden stories, to start learning the denied languages and the spiritual teachings. Doing this also means becoming an ally for indigenous groups in their struggle for their self-determination, as part of their plan for self-governance and all kinds of liberations.

The bottom right would be the second cocoon or divine feminine cocoon which has leaves and describes my commitment to Mother Earth as a sacred entity, as the Divine Feminine, as a nurturing place, as a spiritual relationship, as a learning ground and my commitment to know her, to commune with her, and to defend her.

The bottom left, has a design inspired from Mesoamerican iconography to represent the community cocoon or Radical Love Cocoon. This represents my commitment to my Latinx people, their struggle, my need for radical love, where there will be no need of labels to describe our love and gender manifestations. It is for justice no matter where and who in the world. It is also a commitment to the radical, to the queer, to *nepantla*.

The top left section wing is the cocoon of surrendering, to spirituality, to my life's purpose. It contains the image of smoke that represents my commitment to my ancestors, my drive for healing through art. It is the shamanic cocoon, which I called as the *Surrender Cocoon*; that which recognizes my spiritual, emotional and creative power.

The creative process was as important as the product. My *Tlacuila – Nepantlera* identity is included with a codice design of a flower. I decided to include Cora spiritual devotion to the Peyote, corn and deer (Cora deities). This represents my dedication to the improvisation and spiritual quality of the creative process. During the painting of this piece, my grandfather passed away. Some may say that it was a coincidence, but I felt the presence of someone caressing the back of my head, and in the moment I joked that someone was visiting me. My father called 30 minutes after this happened to tell me the news and the time was the exact moment of his passing. I knew my grandfather had said goodbye to me. This painting represents my political and cultural context in which I ground myself as an artist. Butterfly is a metaphor that rejects the boundaries of North and South, as the monarch butterfly, migrations are part of the natural processes and as indigenous peoples, there was already a connection among peoples. Corn is a testament to this connection, corn being 7,000 years old in Mexico and 1,000 years in Turtle Island.

Cocoons was a necessary project of finding my own process and methodology as an artist. I went through phases of transformation where I explored and surrendered to new knowledge. Now, I have a better understanding of myself as a mestiza and a creative individual.

Chapter 4: Tensions & Reflection

The pretty and the ugly through transformation

*Being a butterfly
is about remembering
there are no real boundaries
or separations
but the ones we create*



This Chapter attempts to look at the tensions that arose among my artistic practice. It will reflect on both *Fluye* and *Cocoons*. The following will describe the ways that I was challenged. It will also look at the wondrous situations and thoughts that inspired myself and others.

Photography

As soon as I got to Costa Rica to work on the *Fluye* project, I gathered images of the land, of the people, and of the spaces. With the same fervor, I gathered an archive of my experience. I used photography to keep developing *Cocoons*. Red flowers became symbols of femininity for me as I walked the humid forests of Abya Yala*. Rivers reminded me of a woman's power of fertility and creation, and so both red flowers and rivers have become metaphors for female power in my art practice. I used photography to capture the meanings. But the capturing carried a hint of mourning of my reality of living so far North away from Mexico and warm lands.

In my family there is a heavy tradition of photography, del album fotográfico, to use as mnemonic devices to remember moments and events. Last

July, I wanted to gather as many photographs and pieces of my grandmother. That each image would tell secrets and stories that she would never be able to tell me. Bell hooks says photographs are visible traces of the unknown (1995, p. 49). Indeed, I gathered photos as I bid farewell to her living presence. Each shot symbolized a piece of her I was taking back with me to the northern lands. In a similar manner, I shot images of the warmth, the birds, the morning sun with nostalgia of having to leave again to the north. I took photos almost every day.

Tensions – talk about my role

I noticed there was tension with my role as a facilitator. First, because I had Yahaira Valverde in Costa Rica as a co-facilitator, I was expecting to have her involved in the actual facilitation. But she ended up more involved in the planning, visioning, and logistics, which left most of the facilitating to me, which I felt uncomfortable with as I did not want my voice to take all of the space. But I used community art tools that help the facilitator share the power. Nevertheless, it was a great experience. As I took the role of lead facilitator, I not only noticed I was shy but it was hard for me to share my personal art in the *Fluye* workshops. My art is so personal, so raw. I noticed it has something to do with confidence, with feeling safe. By the second workshop, I was sharing my poetry. It worked well, since they got to know my style and my artistic voice. I felt the trust between us deepen.

Yahaira and I became good friends and spent a lot of time discussing *Fluye* and my *Cocoons'* research. We walked many trails and visited the petroglyphs from the area. She later took more leadership. She facilitated one warm up exercise and a performance exercise at the 3rd session. She felt comfortable to take initiatives like organizing the food and the locations for the closing.

We even travelled together to Boruca to witness their traditional Diablitos Dance with Christian.

Gendered Reflections

Gender had been a consistent theme within *Fluye* and *Cocoons*. In *Fluye*, gender was often interlaced with conversations on what it means to be a female artist in a rural town that is part of a biological corridor, in Costa Rica. How to juggle all the roles, the expectations, the economic scarcity. But conversations mostly happened outside of the workshops, as we became closer. I had the pleasure of having conversations on womanhood within *Fluye*,

but also in my daily interactions. To be exact, all throughout my time in Costa Rica, I was gifted with friendships with women of all ages. These women have so many stories, so many secrets kept underneath the warmth of the tropical sun. Underneath the hours of 'oficio', daily chores, the stories lay down quiet. But they were heavy in memory. There are stories of sexual violence, of broken marriages, migration, and addictions. These stories leave me with questions like, what is my role in hearing these stories? How do I honour them? I hope to eventually include their stories in a documentary or through my art. So much of this could be explored in this space, with these beautiful people.

I asked one of the women if it would be useful to do a healing circle with other sexual violence survivors from the eight communities. But she said that sometimes other people will judge each other when sharing these experiences, that there is much stigma associated with these experiences still. Though there is much work to do related to these violent experiences, I had limited time and all I could do was listen, that that was honouring them. I was their audience. This would be a longer project to try and give them more of a voice, to share their life stories. Time to build trust, build a relationship, and then through the relationships there could be creative work to mitigate some of the trauma and spread awareness.

Tensions & Reflections– Network of Artists and Fluye

Five women who participated in *Fluye* wanted to continue to organize and come together as a collective. After creating the Facebook group, I started conversations and suggested dates for them and provided guidance. While I was initially the lead organizer of this collective, it eventually morphed into a more organic structure where they self-organized events and meetups. I had to be realistic and accept that my time commitment would decrease as new projects and roles started, as it is important to allow people to self-organize. Two of the women, Raquel and Candy, are doing their own artistic production and are going to festivals and art fairs selling art pieces created from recycled material.

The goal to build a network of artists in Costa Rica with *Fluye* was too ambitious for my limited time in the community. It would need to be a multi-year and multi-stage projects and also requires support over the years. Consequently, I believe that the Las Nubes project could carry out training for leadership in supporting an artisan collective for the Biological Corridor. York University could support this with items that are barriers to their success, such as a space to meet or funding for support and supplies.

Some difficulties for me were promising goals that could not realistically be achieved. For instance, the goal of setting up an artistic collective, which realistically requires substantial amounts of time and effort. Or about the outsider development model. It is important to evaluate the actual good compared to harm that outsiders, like myself, may create in a community they are trying to help. I evaluated *Fluye* project's impact to find out if we had meet our goals by using an evaluation produced in the State of Victoria in Australia by Clare Keating for community artists and projects (2002). After producing and delivering the evaluations, I found that all had positive and constructive feedback. One person said they most liked that the sessions “open(ed) your mind to the expression of art in all its senses and expose it without shame or fear... [and] bring together many people that create and learn within the COBAS.” When asked about improvements, one answered:

“More time, a longer stay for Vero, to further improve on skills and to have access to materials to continue practicing at home.”

“I liked everything. Try to invite more people individually, because I believe that some, unaware, did not dare (participate)”

The answer to what the workshops had given them and what they would like to do after:

“It has taught me to share, be more reliable with people, and know parts of myself I didn't know I had”

“I would keep working to make a group of artisans that does not disintegrate and which represents all COBAS.”

“It was an opportunity to share with neighbors we would not see otherwise, people with the same interests.” and “to see the world differently and know that as artisans we are worth a lot”.

It was great to hear their suggestions and what they received from the project. I realized I should have done an evaluation at the middle of the project because they shared things I had not heard from them. I might have gone deeper in topics or been able to support their personal goals.

I worried about the potential limitations of coming as a York University student with the Las Nubes Project. There are structural issues of power, ie the neoliberal model of 'The North' having the resources to send people to lead a project, of 'parachuting' into a community and imposing my ideas and specifically my frameworks. Another thing to consider was the fact that I was just going to work for a short period of time with little potential of coming back. The way I decided to challenge this power relations was to build relationships with lead artists in the community, so their voices were heard and so it was a collaboration. I tried to work within a non-hierarchical model. I believe I reached this goal, as the lead artisans I worked with, such as Candy,

Raquel, Mariana, and Yahaira, all wanted to keep working in relaxed, sharing, and rotating lead roles, with a horizontal decentralized leadership and shared accountability, just like they suggested *Fluye* had been working. I was glad and honoured that *Fluye* was a model of creative organization. I do believe there could have been more time for outreach for the workshops and to have pop-up events to promote and advertise as mentioned in the evaluation answers above. I hope to come back to work with them, to follow-up with what we started and continue building on *Fluye*.



Epilogue

This MES program has been about becoming through liminality, what I call *Nepantla*. I became face to face with the shadows I had hidden away. Hence, I had those conversations I did not dare to have on race, sexuality, spirituality and love. Creativity was the energetic force in this intimate liminal space. I also conjured a process, to discover which methodology to employ, or which artistic technique to apply. I crafted an art practice as a *Tlacuila-Nepantlera*, one who uses multiple art and cultural forms, with the goal of decolonizing and transforming myself and others. Through my decolonial art practice and my work I found my role as a *Nepantlera*, one who uses art in the in between space, as experimentation, truth calling, and play, but also for healing. In Costa Rica, with the *Fluye* project, I uncovered their creative centres and their hidden stories from the women who participated in the workshops and lit a small spark for the birth of a network of artists in the eight communities in the Biological Corridor. I conjointly explored my own indigenous ancestry, the erotic, the Divine Feminine; and accepted my identity as mestiza, as mariposa, queer/fluid, and as latinx.

It is very important for me to keep exploring what it means to be a mestiza woman born and raised in Guatemala and Mexico, but living in Tkoronto while working in Mexico and travelling in Abya Yala. How will my aesthetic keep morphing as I establish my artistic practice? How will my future art reflect those places, people and stories while I work all around Turtle Island and Abya Yala? I intend to establish a more intimate relationship with Turtle Island and their Original People. I also aspire to continue a profound commitment to my indigeneity and artistic and cultural practice.

My next phase is to connect with my Cora and Mexica roots. In terms of the Mexica ancestry, I will continue learning the language and the ancestral knowledge. I am thinking of joining the Aztec dancing group with Ivan Garcia. As well as learning curanderia healing practices from the southwest of the US and Mexico in the future. I am encouraged to publish the *Rio and Rocas* Poetry book. I am hoping to raise funds and publish in Costa Rica. Another goal is to work on my poetry written in the two years, find an editor, get funding and publish a collection of poetry, and submit poems to journals, and magazines. Similarly, I hope to work to exhibit my photography and visual art produced in Costa Rica and through *Red Surrender*.

This journey has been a tale of becoming into my own process and self. Becoming myself through phases that act as cocoons where transfiguration is painful but also beautiful and full of revelations. I have created rituals, healed wounds, and became more honest with myself through artistic practice. I will continue working on *Red Surrender*. This is just the beginning.

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Appendix A

Workshop Design: *Taller 2 - Cusingos (Wednesday, January 26)*

Need to do

Tener musica- dar bienvenida

Tener todas las secciones listas a las 12:30

Comida lista

Intro -

Saludo berrinchero - luego otros saludos con el cuerpo

Quien soy:

Artista multidisciplinaria:

poesía, fotografía, la pintura, y el performance

es todo sobre la comunicación - 80 % no- verbal

crear historias partiendo del cuerpo, el uso de los sentidos, los gestos

Enseñar Photos y poemas -

Somos por naturaleza todos artistas

Desde pequenos somos seres creativos

El uso de la imaginación es básica y necesaria para el bienestar de la sociedad

Todos somos artistas, es solo el tiempo que dedicamos a la practica

Para mi el arte

Arte como descubridor de mis raíces mestizas

interés en mi legado indigena - como petroglifos

que nos pueden enseñar, que conocimiento natural - cósmico

en lo natural,
en lo femenino - descubro mi poder como mujer.
en el arte como herramienta de terapia, herramienta de liberación - en contra del control social y cultural

Estudiante de York

como artista y trabajadora cultural estoy viendo
sobre la **transformación**:

Transformación como herramienta política y fuerza creativa que permite a las personas la posibilidad de cambiar por medio del arte al alcanzar conocimiento personal, sanación y un énfasis en la cultura.

Es el proceso en el cual uno puede moverse en un espacio de nuevas posibilidades mas inclusivas y con mas amor y

El uso de la imaginación para poder ir mas allá de las estructuras sociales que nos controlan y nos dañan.

Crear nuevas realidades que se oponen a lo que nos controlan y dañan: corporaciones (hidroeléctricas), los estándares de belleza, la indiferencia, la deshumanización, el racismo, el sexismo y demás.

Yo estoy viendo como la transformación con la practica de descolonización- que es un enfoque para afectar un cambio personal y colectivo.

asi como la mariposa pasa por varias transformaciones para ser mariposa
igual uno requiere muchas transformaciones personal y colectiva constantemente
y el arte es un vehiculo,
una manera de ayudar a que uno vaya en cada transformación

Objetivos del taller:

Crear un espacio cultural dedicado a la creación colectiva: esto significa el valor de compartir energias, estar en un espacio especial en donde no hay errores, y estamos juntos para divertirnos.

Explorar temas de agua, identidad y transformación

Crear juntos una visión de artesanía y arte para el Corredor Biológico Alexander Skutch

Hacer un circulo

Un ritual - con la tierra

Este ritual lo aprendí en un programa de Teatro Aluna, de una artista indígena Canadiense. Ayuda a abrir la imaginación y nuestros puntos energéticos. Mide cuanto estamos en sincronía. Y ayuda a la concentración, relajarnos y conectarnos.

pies alineados con hombros
respiramos ondo
ponemos manos en diamante arriba de nuestro vientre. es nuestro centro energético
tomamos la fuerza, energía masculina mano derecha - luego la femenina con mano izq
y vamos lentamente a trazar con nuestras manos hasta el suelo.
ahi colectamos tierra= imaginen de que color, textura, temperatura, olor - 4 veces.
agua= imaginen color, textura, temperatura, olor, salada? -- 4 veces
mezclamos - 4 veces
subimos por piernas la mezcla y en el vientre cruzamos brazos y luego extendemos al cielo
abrimos brazos y vemos al suelo- somos pajaros - que tipo? que tamaño, que vemos, en donde estamos - 3 veces. aleteamos
abrimos a la derecha y con brazo izquierda aplaudimos
movemos brazo por cuerpo y aplaudimos a la izquierda hacia el circulo.
REPETIMOS. a los 4 direcciones.

Ya vimos como estamos conectados
Vamos a estar en sincronía. Ya que cuando estamos creando juntos, jugando nuestras energías estarán unidas por estos momentos. Estamos en un espacio artístico colectivo

Estiramos - ejercicio de Truko. - empezando por los dedos- muñecas- codos- hombros -cabeza- pechocaminar por el espacio.

Performance

Es comunicación no-verbal - es utilizar el cuerpo, los sentidos.

Todos estamos actuando todo el tiempo. Todo tenemos distintos personajes. En la escuela, en la casa, en el trabajo, en la calle.

Diana Taylor,

que el performance se trata de gestos, de la cultura oral, del movimiento, de las actividades que transmiten conocimiento como cocinar, baile y todo carga con significado

habla de que los cuerpos son hechos de material poroso y que como somos parte de la tierra.

It connects us and allows us to learn from each other, plants, animals, water through eyesight, touch, smell, taste, movement.

Expression corporal - embodied expression

Expression corporal transmite conocimiento social, memoria y identidad

Las personas usan los sentidos, escuchar, sentir, olor, ver....para transmitir conocimiento y para la experiencia de vida.

Ejercicio de Respiracion

Todos en el piso - parados.

caminatas de sonido & ecologia del sonido (*Sound ecology y Sound walking*)

El sonido es buenísimo para recordar - para trabajar la memoria

el sonido ayuda en formar nuestro sentido de ser- la identidad- el sentido del hogar

Muchos usan cosas visuales para recordar. pero muchos expertos del tema sugieren que es movimiento del cuerpo a través de lugares especiales que unifican los sentidos, los lugares y el saber que traen el pasado a la experiencia del presente.

Time - place - personhood

comunidad acustica

caminatas de sonido

Al caminar nos pone en dialogo con la naturaleza. literal - físicamente el cuerpo se mueve, siente, escucha y figurativamente - por la memoria y su conexión personal y emocional

es una exploración del sonido con la intención de escuchar activamente

no es caminar solamente, si no meterse - incorporarse al caminar - enfocarse en los sentidos

Regresamos al circulo - con material

escribir - FREE FLOW

escribir 5 sonidos que escucharon y les dio una respuesta emocional - memoria, curiosidad.

Escoger 1 - escribir sobre el sonido. sin parar.

Recursos literarios

METÁFORA

Es la transferencia de significado entre dos palabras (una real y la otra imaginario). La metáfora impura es por ej. Cabellos de oro (cabellos ter. Real y oro ter. imaginario) y la metáfora pura por ej. Lumbres del cielo (las estrellas se deduce)

HIPÉRBOLE

Se produce cuando se altera la realidad de forma exagerada

<Érase un hombre a una nariz pegado...>

PARADOJA

Consiste en unir dos ideas irreconciliables. Tras lo que parece un mensaje absurdo, se esconde una idea razonable o una profunda verdad.

*<Vivo sin vivir en mi
y tan alta vida espero
que muero porque no muero>*

PERSONIFICACIÓN

Consiste en atribuir propiedades a realidades del mundo natural.

<Murmuran las fuentes, lloran los cielos...>

SIMIL O COMPARACIÓN

Consiste en relacionar un termino real con otro imaginario con el que guarda una semejanza, los elementos mas utilizados son Cual, Como...

<Sus ojos son como dos escarabajos negros>

ONOMATOPEYA

Es un tipo de aliteración que reproduce sonidos reales:

<el tictac del reloj>

ANÁFORA

Es la repetición de una o varias palabras en posición inicial de una frase o verso:

*<Todas visten un vestido
todas calzan un zapato
todas comen un plátano
todas son guapas>*

Escribir un poema

- usando recursos.

compartir~

Revision of my final work - Memoria

*Mi objetivo es de create una Memoria
documento con procesos creativos
con las técnicas
y con nuestro arte? y nuestras reflexiones y poesía
(a final document with art processes, reflections and art).*

-Es mejor enfocarme en seguir creando? y enfocar mi energía en una exhibicion o en una asociación?

Posibilidad de tener mas talleres la próxima semana?

Lunes - Rio por Finca de Ricke

Miercoles - Galeron de Quizarra /Cusingos

Final thoughts and questions

Appendix B

Workshop Design: *Taller 3- Montecarlo (Friday, January 28)*

Calentamiento - cuerpo + mente + mente + artista + espíritu

Reconocer el espacio

tocar el espacio

oler el espacio

escuchar - cerrar ojos

Saludo - con ojos (reconocernos)

Luego nos vamos a saludar de diferentes formas:

con los **ojos** - luego con los **brazos, cuerpo** (usar imaginación)

luego dar la **bienvenida** a todos con **abrazos**

Circulo - ceremonia del “Cool card” - tarjeta Tuanis

dejar todas las apariencias, todos los personajes, características, palabras, frases que nos tienen muy atoradas, muy enprisionados, muy duros

Grupos de 3-4

Yes and teatro improv-

reglas de improvisación:

1- decir si

2- la primer idea, es la mejor idea

3- haz que tus compañerxs se vean bien

Juego de cuanta cuentos -

primera persona empieza a contar una historia. La primera empieza y da un poquito mas para dar contexto. La siguiente sigue y lo primero que dice es:

“SI, Y...” sigue la historia 3 o 4 oraciones.

la idea es que se acepte toda la historia del compañerx

Ejercicio de - Exquisite Corpse

cadáver exquisito gráfico. - juego surrealista de creación colectiva sostenían que la creación, en especial la poética, debe ser anónima y grupal, intuitiva, espontánea, lúdica y en lo posible automática. con hojas dobladas en 4.

maquina (Yaha) - grupo de 3 o 4 - QUE es la maquina?
reaccion- niveles- contraste - hacemos ejemplo
invitar a todos a que sigan el impulso y la imaginación y hagan juntos una maquina.
velocidad
intensidad
sentimientos

Performance - teatro del oprimido

explicar que es el teatro del oprimido - alguien sabe?
compartir que viene del dramaturgo - pedagogo Augusto Boal, que se basa en las enseñanzas de Paolo Freire y su educación popular
"sería la de que se trata del teatro de las clases oprimidas y para los oprimidos, para desarrollar una lucha contra estructuras opresoras".
Ésta última es la más conocida de todas y todas tienen por objeto transformar al espectador en protagonista de la acción dramática y, "a través de esta transformación, ayudar al espectador a preparar acciones reales que le conduzcan a la propia liberación". Por ello recibe el nombre de espect-actor.

En parejas

Ejercicio de Respiración

Todos en el piso - parados- meditación

mirada - Escribir o una coreografía o acuarela

Recursos poéticos- literarios - tenerlos en una pizarra - para que los usen cuando escriban

ACUARELA

Appendix C

Workshop Design - Closing session in Quizarra (Saturday, February 7th)

Quizarra – community space

9 am - coordinadoras

fijar fechas - crear una directiva -

poner reglas de uso de material - seguimiento de los talleres

uso de Facebook o whatsapp?

10 am empieza

musica

10:20 - libro

enseñar lo que lleve

me lo llevo sin terminar

que es la fe mandar por correo

confirmar los siguientes pasos:

— editar-- diseño de libro - portada - edición de poemas - confirmar con los poetas

finalizar y aprovar ediciones

opciones de portada - papel reciclado?

hacer juntas el papel

decorarlo

y luego cocerlo o engraparlo

Dejar presupuesto para la impresión

se las mando cuando acaben

10:30 closing ceremonia de botellas
y gracias especiales a....

10:45 - bailamos con Raquel

11:45 am NOON - comida

PLATICA con Cristian - platica sobre la cultura Brunka y los rios y petroglifos
1:00pm/ 1:30 pm

After Closing ceremony

Empezar grupo- Formalizar grupo

Poner fecha fija!

Segundo Sabado de cada Mes

Poner nombre

Organizadoras

grupo en FACE?

Poner a persona encargada de matriales!

Appendix D

El gavilán - águila

*Suena y suena
no lo sé porque
solo sé que no lo puedo lograr
pero sí pero si lo hare
Caminaré en el sendero oscuro y las ramas recuperé.
Mientras sueño y no lo veo
camino eso haré
Es como un rio tranquilo y sediento,
que en la vereda vió la luz
es como el agua que bebes.
Quiero verte iluminar Mientras miro y no escucho,
vivo y no vivo,
sueño y no creo
entiendo mientras creo verme al fin volar.*

Candy

The Hawk - Eagle Sounds and sounds

I do not know why
I just know it is hard to achieve
but yes, I will do
I walk in the dark path and the branches I will recover.
While I sleep and do not see it
walk I will do
It is like a river peaceful and thirsty,
that in the road the light was shown
it is like the water you drink.
I want to see you illuminate,
as I look and do not listen,
alive and not alive,
dream and do not believe
I understand while I find myself finally fly.

Candy

Appendix E

*Los pasos que saben
así donde van son pasos,
con guía y intuición.*

*Los pasos sin saber así donde vas
son pasos del destino sin rumbo y con sorpresas.*

*El sonido del canto de las aves,
chicharras que riman como gotas que caen del mismísimo cielo.*

*El viento que transmite libertad,
dejarse volar y hasta las nubes tocar.*

*El silencio de la montaña que llena tu alma y corazón,
de tranquilidad, de repente el burrumbun del río,
de las rocas que impactan mi corazón saboreando
el agua sin poder tomarla.*

Raquel

The steps you know
and where they go are steps,
with guidance and intuition.

The steps without knowing well where you are going
are destiny's steps aimlessly and with surprises.

The sound of birdsongs,
cicadas rhyming like drops falling from heaven itself.

The wind that conveys freedom,

let yourself fly and touch the clouds.

The silence of the mountain that fills your heart and soul,
tranquility, suddenly the river makes burrumbun,
impacting rocks
and my heart savoring unable to reach water.

Raquel

Appendix F

Red Soil

Poetry Chapbook

Home Sick

no se que siento
I think Im home sick
to a place that has seldom felt like home
I think I am home sick to the people I love
to the community that sprouts radical love
I miss my free loving
erotic living
I miss my free, 2, spirited, multiverse

I have been in soil trails
with camera heavy in hand
listening to the feathery beings
blue, green, yellow, red
movements, symphonies

I have been in hot air
weight-full particles
touching my skin
making it water
sweat dripping
drops giving back to soil

tropical forests
with abundant life
you are orchestrating living

I fall into light filled with colours
when I start to share my breath
my breath that describes my hued heart
awaiting to continue to love
my breath designed by the language of my family
there are more curves in this breath

that what I knew
it is freedom
it shakes the cold out

the silence is let out

and so,
I fall into life
when I start to move my bare feet in the humid red soil
poems birthing
images of red birthing
spirals traced in rock
red women walking through the *nican tlacan* path
the red path
I am also red
red with fire, strength, blood, birth
Red
filling in the mysteries
filling in the silence
filling the knowledge of *Anahuac*

what is it to this humid magic?
this hot land spell?
these tropics?

It is like to describe the summer sweeping strong
after a dark cold winter
It is to describe my being being swept
by the sun's embrace
to be woken up at darkness by howling coyotes
to forget how my eye lids shut close for hours on end
it is like to describe
what is missing from from my muscle structure
drained by the cold
the colours dim
food bland
water frozen

what it feels
what it gives
to be in rocks
rock inspiration
rock ancestry

portals to cosmic realms
portals to cosmic knowledge
portals to artistry
nepantla

Imagining rituals of blood filling the spirals
blood of life

fresh wind
providing strength
the stars above
as I see beyond the mountain range
I see deep into the jungle
3 bright green lights
then there was darkness

tropical forests
with generous strife
orchestrating living

tropical rays
morning bright
opened eyes to the morning sun
adorned by songs of roosters

soil. water. love.

from soil is born inspiration

ingest her fully

knowing I was from the house of soil
dark humus

my humble creations are fertile greens
my art grounding dreams
dark humus

my art like sprouting greens
my breath is soil
my hands, my eyes the water that nurtures the seed

my legs strong healthy ground
where inspiration flows upwards
from the ground to my heart
to all areas of my landscape
soil.
ground.
growth.
birth

soil erotica

Moving through you.
I close my eyes and with the breath
I find you

I am startled with the fragrance
of your dense deep cavities
you are adorned with musical notes
irresistible aromatic compounds
 citrus melodies
wooden half notes
 fruity flirty stances
a secret secreting formulae

I intake you
I breath you in
carrying your
every detail
 floral
 amber
 woody
 leather
 fruity
 oceanic
 green - juicy goodness

I keep inhaling and breathing fast
with the fear of missing a hint

It brings ecstasy with each breath
each aroma
the ones I could only imagine

Like when I think of passing the tip of my nose
in the surface of your inner thighs
My face approaching el delineado de tu piel
Or the concave curves of your navel moving towards your musky forest
my face close to your sweet smelling neck
to intake you pachamama is erotic
It makes my body tingle

we find each other
the trail finds me
Latin *perfumare*, meaning "to smoke through."
Perfumery,
 origins of scents
And I am treated with a bouquet of perfumes
 like the intrinsic tail of the Quetzales *

*beautiful birds

Update

To up-date
is referred to the unwinding of time from my fingers
to let go of sticky numbers in my body structure
 broken and pasted
 together in too tight of configuration

Up-date is often phrased to masquerade
the pure need to remember
the next present and the longing to feel close.

Up-wards
I struggle to escape a sitting dynasty
the strangling of apathetic rulers

Up-stairs
I maintain the urge of traveling miles
to find you in your sleep

to whisper a melody of forests and sea
while my finger tips wander to caress your skin

Up-date
suggests the right alignment of the planets
when I will find you
after i drum and dance rhythms of our ancestors
to the full moon
tracing the moments our spirits shared love
while suspended in non-linear time

Up-load
is referred to the moment I will share those secrets
I carefully kept in my treasure box
safe in my colourful luggage,
I call
my body

Rios de Cacao

I see the chocolate rivers speaking
 cinnamon creeks
 honey prados
rivers flowing after times of silence
 the sleep washed by flowing time
washed away
 rivers rushing, gushing free
 curves meeting with old turns
you are calling to me
 a primordial voice
 a grandmother's voice
You ask me to think twice to reflect
 why are you here?
 come to me
 be
live between the trees
walk in this brown soil
breath the spring into colour
visit the cousins
connect with old friends
find vibrancy in the spring

And you show me your open wounds
 the scars in your landscape
And the spaces you have given yourself willingly

Appendix G.1

Red Surrender - script excerpt

Direction, Set Design, Costume and Lighting: Watah Artists-In-Residence

Dramaturgy: d'bi.young anitafrika

Characters

JADE: young woman from Mexico that embarks a journey of self initiation (of womanhood-initiation to dreams and magic)

MOTHER Seed Woman: a goddess from Red Universe, creator mother goddess

CRONE Sky Woman: Over seer - wise woman goddess

MAIDEN Red Woman: Shaman- goddess of sexuality, fertility, sensuality and the erotic

Time

Centred in the present with segments of future and past. Timeless spiral of time.

Place

Dream world. Red, a mystical place that could be the past, the present, or the future, or all in one. Toronto. All three places interlaced

Playwright's Note:

Red Surrender is a culminating work of my uncoverings and surrenderings. It is a reflection on my personal & ancestral healing. It was co-created with ancestors, cacao, rivers, red, inspired on stories and myths of Ixchel, Xochiquetzal, & White Buffalo Woman, created in Turtle Island & Abya Yala.

Red Surrender is a bio-mythic performance piece on a young woman's journey of initiation to wombanhood, magic, power of dreams, but most importantly to herself. It is a tale of becoming. Becoming through phases that act as cocoons where transfiguration is painful, fearful, beautiful and full of revelations. The characters incarnate the Divine

Feminine, going through the crone, the mother and the maiden.

SCENE FOUR

Soundscape Universe, word and birth

Lights change, it gets brighter. Seed Woman starts speaking. She has a bright but wise look, She is very witty after her birth.

Seed Woman speaks while moving through the space in a slow well defined stances that slightly resemble the words spoken. There are silences between the ideas/beats.

Seed Woman

I am Seed Woman

through the word I create this world

I am infinity

I exists in the totality of WORD

word word word

language - mother tongue

la lingua

smooth. wet . fresh . sweet . bitter. long. tasting . organ

Seed Woman enjoys here wittiness..se rie

I am Seed Woman

you, me

birth all, all that came from Red

birth a universe of breath and sound

of letters

letters compounding to words

words words words

words to images

There is a moment of silence where there is more movements with no words

I am Seed woman, I birth the sky and the grounds
I leave my mark in the soil. in the red flowers
And they say you can hear my voice softly pronouncing words.
words in song of dawn
melodies devoted to the waters of inception
you can listen closely to a song to the sun's origins
another to the cactus,
a gentle one for the deer
a soft tune to the oak
or even a romance of the sea
symphonies of sound and birth
a soundscape universe

Seed Woman ritualistically puts on the cloths of Jade as a transition and disappears under the cloth. Lights dim.

SCENE FIVE

Uncoverings de la piel

Lights gets brighter. Jade comes out of cloth and wanders. She ends up sitting down on Lower stage. It is an intimate moment, lights change again. Jade is conversing with the cosmos and her body. She is re-learning the lost memory...she hears each word as it falls on her ear like she is just finding out. She speaks in a slow rhythm como si un ancestor le esta diciendo y ella lo considera and explores the idea with movement and her body. It is a sacred moment.

Jade

I know everything is written.
All is designed,
garigoleado
Painted under my skin

In the inside of my body
debajo de mi piel morena
de mi piel de colores, de tonos, de soles y lunas
y encuentro símbolos ancestrales que se comunican

I know as I close my eyes and travel
Through my breath I find the template, the blueprint
Of all those who became before and will after me

Inside of my being is the script
My body is the landscape
My body holds the memory
My bones carriers. bones cargadores de memory
My stomach holds the beginning of the universe. and the end of each sentence
My womb is a Constellation

My pelvic floor is the structural foundation of the energetic force of my body
each cell, right now, is connecting to the healing planets
de lunas, round moons, new moons
to Cacao, to fresh mint, to rivers, to Tumeric

Dear, bears and butterflies
The dreamworld is the portal
As I dream I am carried to knowledge and I am invited to<she says it ?walk the red path>
I know my journey begins with myself

Appendix G.2

Red Surrender - performance excerpt

Dropbox Link :

https://www.dropbox.com/s/fgjj9c15mgted8e/IMG_2446.MOV?dl=0

Appendix H

Rio y Rocas Poetry Book

Appendix I

Soil Moves Chapbook of Poetry

Radical Love

I tell myself I have radical beauty
to teach myself to love me fully
Even though some days it takes me
 a little longer a little more convincing
 a little more persuasion
to believe, to know I have radical beauty

Sometimes I get numb,
while I struggle to erase the messages
that appear from the deep storage
messages of spoiled beauty of shades of dark
Thoughts of unbeauty
structured by a harmful foreign aesthetic
Sometimes I have been ashamed And some shades dark
 I had been attempting to lighten
had been reaching for lighter shades to hide
To forget the darker

The unspeakable The erased names de mis abuelas
The invisible indigeneity The denied queer histories

Sometimes I get silenced
clumped with euphoric feelings
Clogged with rejected waves of passion for feminine beauty Choked with ignored
gushes of attraction to she, ze, they or her only the pen can let out those words
the ink allows shades of congestion to flow out
And while I unblock the clog
I uncover the refuted crushes and tears shed for my girls
I have radical love
I challenge the boundaries of love structures

And after all, my sexuality is personal
an intimate affair it's about
 discovery
it's about
 recovery
expanding definitions
it's about radical love

I tell myself I have radical beauty
Sometimes I get more confusion,
the shades of dark have encountered exoticness

A twisted eroticness in my skin

A rotten form of brilliance

Piel morena, you are radical beauty
my shades of dark sing by the tune of mixed stories
allowing me to be light with the snow,

 be dark with the sun
Even though brown skin is confusing
my skin shows ancestral traces
traveling steps, coloured fabric
Intrinsic prints rooted in south of turtle island.

My body holds my fragments,
puzzle pieces of happiness and pain
my spirit holds my fragments of lost knowledge and dreams
my geographic story is a labyrinth of genetic prints
I am now a traveler A tlacuilo
a painter of stories of dreams painting for a home

my brown skin reveals resistance
My piel morena shouts independence retaliation,
screams to the drops of rancid smoke

that invade my mind to conquer my heart,
I cling to survival words,

To the radical beauty in my skin in my body, in my daring moles

my pronounced curves
my beauty is in the shades of brown
it shows how my chichimeca blood rebelled shows how my nahuatl language is still
strong and my darkness insurgent *I have radical beauty*
I have radical love I love my radical